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New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Address by Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Djibouti.

Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of Djibouti, His Excellency Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Guelleh (*spoke in French*): On the occasion of this historic final session of the General Assembly of the current millennium, which is my first, as I took office in May this year, I extend, on behalf of the people of Djibouti, our sincere best wishes to all the members of the Assembly. I should also like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this fifty-fourth session. Your long and extensive experience with the United Nations, beginning as the representative of the South-West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) before your country's independence and continuing as its Permanent Observer, has afforded you a deep insight into the internal workings of the Assembly, and the challenges it now faces. We are convinced that, thanks to your ample skills and commitment, this session of the Assembly will bring a remarkable period to a close on a very positive note.

We also wish to express our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for the exemplary manner in which he conducted the work of the General Assembly. The fact that the Assembly was able to accomplish so much at its fifty-third session was in great measure due to his dedication, skill and intelligent management.

We must also acknowledge our great admiration for the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General in continuing his exemplary work under difficult and trying circumstances. On too many fronts the Organization has been facing challenges which jeopardize its proper functioning, whether dealing with issues of peace and conflict, development, or addressing the severe poverty faced by many in the world community. Despite a sharp reduction in the inflow of funds at a time of escalating demands on the Organization, the Secretary-General has succeeded in maintaining a high degree of effectiveness through intelligent rationalization and restructuring. The Organization is therefore continuing to play an important role in world affairs, which is in no small measure attributable to the enlightened leadership of the Secretary-General.

As this millennium draws to a close, we find ourselves in a post-cold-war era of globalism. The doctrine that the general pursuit of economic and financial prosperity will necessarily lead to open markets,

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greater international movement of resources, capital and labour is deeply entrenched. As we progress, it is claimed, this global system will produce freer societies and expanding middle classes, which, in turn, will exert pressure for political freedoms. In the end, it is also claimed, we can all expect the spread of peace as countries become more interdependent and economically integrated, for free societies do not go to war, at least with each other.

This model calls for the ascendancy of a more efficient private sector and a reduced role for government. For developing countries, the pursuit of maximum economic flexibility has been accompanied by a massive reorganization of legal, social, financial, economic, political and institutional structures — or, as it is known, structural adjustment. The cost of these changes has been considerable, not only in financial terms, but also in human and social terms as well. As the social safety net in many countries consists of government jobs and services, downsizing government has meant considerable suffering, and often with a political price to be paid.

Thanks to the spread of technology, particularly in the communications sector, it is now possible for companies and organizations to operate on a global scale and to enter virtually any local market of their choosing. Consequently, economic domination has shifted to the large, transnational corporations and financial conglomerates, which are increasingly the prime movers in most economic systems. Predictably, the poor and unprepared are increasingly isolated and marginalized. It is therefore not surprising that there is a mounting and widespread backlash against the destructive effects of this global juggernaut.

The old market economy system following the Second World War — the Marshall Plan era — survived because there were few persistent losers. Everyone got something from the system and could claim ownership. We cannot say that today, for the roster of losers is mounting ominously. This is a distressing omen for the new millennium, made all the more tragic and infuriating because of the abundance of possible remedies. We can make the system work effectively and beneficially if the will is there. But at present the international community lacks determination and a sense of compassion. That does not bode well for mankind.

Globalization and the rapid expansion and integration of the international economy have undoubtedly brought immense benefits to many countries and positive changes in the living conditions of many individuals. However, many countries and their populations, particularly in the developing world, are increasingly facing marginalization and hopelessness because they are not able to cope with the rapid pace of integration. The least developed countries in particular require special attention so that they do not slip further into the abyss of poverty and disintegration.

Clearly, the Horn of Africa has had far more than its share of wars, natural disasters, collapsing States, economic decline and wasted national and human potential. For Djibouti, survival alone has consistently presented an enormous challenge. However, our nation today is stronger and more unified than ever before. We owe this to the wisdom, perseverance and foresight of our first President and father of the nation, my mentor, The Honourable Hassan Gouled Aptidon, who voluntarily retired a few months ago — a praiseworthy decision. He forged a nation and gave it purpose and strength. His enlightened leadership enabled us to remain at peace, while sensitive to our region's difficulties and needs. I am proud to follow in the footsteps of this great soul, and I am determined to safeguard his legacy and our democratic traditions and institutions.

Djibouti will continue to work for good governance, democracy and independence, with respect for human rights. We will continue, true to our cultural heritage, to give sanctuary to people displaced by conflicts in our region, despite the severe strain this puts on our meagre resources.

Africa has many hopeful spots, but there remain a number of disturbing conflicts involving nations, countless rebel and separatist movements and factions. Democratic elections took place a few months ago in two major States of sub-Saharan Africa — Nigeria and South Africa — and in smaller ones, such as Djibouti, while in most of the major conflicts ravaging the continent ceasefires or peace processes are under way.

In looking over these developments, what can we reasonably expect? What must we strive to bring about? Our first priority must be to bring conflict and destruction to an end. That is why ceasefires, the withdrawal of combatants, disarmament, the settlement of conflicts, and the resettlement of displaced persons are important priorities for Africa.

As conflicts rage in the heart of the continent, a dangerous new tendency has begun to appear. Conflicts are no longer localized or fought between two clear adversaries, but attract a growing legion of participants

with divergent agendas. It is depressing to witness the massive loss of life, the wanton destruction and the virtual collapse of societies.

We are therefore relieved that the brutal conflict in Sierra Leone is at last resolved. Besides Somalia, perhaps the most worrying conflict now is Angola, where again outside actors appear to be playing significant roles.

We therefore naturally support the call of the Secretary-General, who in his report on conflict in Africa called for a reversal of the international community's great reluctance in recent years to assume the political and financial responsibilities associated with deploying peacekeeping operations.

We must also do everything we can to augment the United Nations capacity in humanitarian assistance, as well as in post-conflict peace-building.

None of this, though, should absolve Africa of the need to come together to strengthen its own crisis response and peacekeeping capability, through the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and subregional organizations.

Last year, in his address to this Assembly, my predecessor noted the sudden and surprising outbreak of massive hostilities between our neighbours, Ethiopia and Eritrea. This has been the cause of much anguish, apprehension and instability in the Horn of Africa. The loss of life on both sides is among the greatest ever witnessed between African States. Persistent efforts by the OAU and various countries, including Djibouti, have proved to be in vain. Ethiopia is presently seeking further clarification on the "technical arrangements" proposed by the OAU, and we hope that the ongoing efforts will produce the desired breakthrough. If a ceasefire does not take effect and agreement is not reached, the destruction and further loss of life will once again be deplorable. Years will be needed to repair the damage done to ethnic tolerance and trust in the Horn of Africa. We therefore support the OAU, which is demonstrating its tenacity and foresight in trying to bring about a lasting resolution of this crisis.

Clearly, Eritrea needs to be a good neighbour to all its neighbours. Djibouti is now facing a relentless threat of destabilization through incursions and landmines, as well as the training and arming of disaffected elements. Rather than being confined to Ethiopia, hostilities have spread to practically every country in the Horn. We sincerely believe that Eritrea would gain more as an equal partner in the collective regional efforts to fashion a comprehensive peace, augment development and address the challenges of environmental degradation, rather than pursuing a policy of confrontation and senseless and reckless destabilization.

The renewed dialogue between the Palestinians and the new Israeli leader appears to offer a promising opportunity for charting a new course in the Middle East. The most urgent need is to restore confidence — a task that will involve winning over the hearts and minds of Palestinians jaded by the cynicism of successive Israeli Governments. The timely implementation of the provisions of the recent agreement should help build the necessary confidence by making the parties see reason. Advantage must be taken of the current momentum, despite the efforts of hostile factions.

Now that a time-table has been set for the consideration of final-status issues such as borders, settlements, the status of Jerusalem, refugees, water and statehood for Palestine, the outcome will depend on the will and commitment of both sides. The road should also be cleared for a settlement of the Golan Heights question and for the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon, in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

The crippling sanctions imposed on Iraq almost a decade ago have taken a heavy toll on the population, particularly on the elderly, women and children. We urge the international community to undertake a realistic review of these sanctions with a view to lifting them altogether.

The Arab world and the world as a whole have recently lost several remarkable and pragmatic leaders. King Hussein of Jordan, the Amir of Bahrain and King Hassan II of Morocco are no longer with us. Although we all feel a sense of loss at their premature demise, we have every confidence their legacies will live on.

Mr. President, I beg your indulgence, as I would now like to speak at length about the tragedy in Somalia. For nearly a decade now we have been witnessing the inexorable disintegration of Somalia. With their country racked by violence and lacking a government, the Somali people are being denied their basic human rights. It is imperative that every effort be made to alleviate the suffering of the millions of Somalis who have been living a precarious existence for a decade now. Housing and water are alarmingly scarce. Rampant lawlessness prevails, the country is at a political impasse, and its future is bleak. If no concrete steps are taken, the result

will be continued misery and despair, as well as the continued destabilization of Somalia's neighbours.

This unique situation, I would even say this tragedy, ought to be given priority — the kind of serious consideration that is given to other tragedies. We strongly believe that international and regional stability depend to a large extent on the domestic stability of all of the States Members of this Organization.

It is tragic indeed that the international community is unwilling to acknowledge this reality, simply because, it seems, it has no vital national interests at stake there. So the warlords are left to fight it out until a victor emerges and a degree of order is restored. Political will on the part of the international community can bring peace to Somalia, too.

Because of pervasive indifference and a lack of resolve, vision and action on our part, Somalia is crumbling. It is no longer a politically viable entity. Indeed, the continued anarchy in that country is indicative of the failure of global governance to serve poor countries in the developing world. The Somali people know that only too well. A decade of violence, hunger, disease and uncertainty has given rise to unparalleled levels of despair. All Somalis, it is safe to say, are living below the poverty line, and the devastating civil war shows no signs of abating in most parts of the country. Somalia could easily become a magnet for criminal elements, drug traffickers and terrorists as well as a dumping ground of dangerous toxic wastes. Overfishing by foreigners of Somalia's unprotected waters is also a cause of great concern to us.

The latest comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on Somalia accurately notes that the country has degenerated into a black hole of anarchy, with no national government or attributes of statehood. The principal victims of this senseless conflict are an entire generation of Somali children, who are being denied access to education.

The United Nations intervened in Somalia in 1992 with all the right intentions: to restore peace, stability, and law and order. In this respect, it was entrusted with assisting the Somali people in rebuilding their economy and their social and political life; restoring their institutional structures; achieving national political reconciliation; and recreating a Somali state based on democratic governance. Regrettably, those laudable intentions came to naught following the termination of the United Nations Operation in Somalia, due to the lack of cooperation from the Somali factions over security issues, and despite the exceptional circumstances, in particular the absence of a government in Somalia.

Since the end of the United Nations operation, two conferences have given rise to a certain optimism — the Ethiopian-sponsored Sodere conference and the Cairo conference, sponsored by the Egyptian Government. However, both conferences succeeded only in highlighting the divisions among the warlords on the one hand and the interested countries on the other.

Several countries and organizations have worked tirelessly to restore some measure of governance in Somalia. The focus, though, has always remained on bringing together the feuding warlords in order to assist them in reaching an agreement that would end the stalemate. But seeking a lasting settlement through the warlords, as has repeatedly and unambiguously been demonstrated throughout the conflict, has proved to be wishful thinking; uncertainty reigns, and the culture of impunity persists. Lately, we have seen the formation of all sorts of political and military alliances across factional lines in a bid to pacify the country, but such initiatives are often greeted with scepticism or even criticism by other factions and even by certain countries. Clearly, not a single factional leader can claim national support or acceptance, because Somali civil society has grown cynical about a political game devoid of sincerity, vision and substance.

Everybody agrees in recognizing that the warlords can offer nothing that would lead us to believe that they will ever agree on a lasting settlement, much less the implementation of conclusions agreed between them. The people are tired of false rhetoric and deception, as they become poorer and their future becomes bleaker every day. Even beyond Somalia, the warlords pose a potential threat. They need to be resisted, for there is the very real problem of a "contagion" effect, whereby chronic instability in one country in the Horn might prove to be a real threat to its neighbours, if it is not contained or eliminated within a reasonable period of time.

Liberia's seven-year war, with its child soldiers and unspeakable atrocities against civilians, helped set a tragic pattern that was repeated in Sierra Leone. Obviously, already inundated with weapons, Somalia hardly needs external involvement by way of arms supplies or proxy confrontations, but that is precisely what is now taking place in that country. For all of us, this situation only increases our worry about Somalia's future.

The challenge that we now face is therefore of establishing an authority to fill the void that is continuously being exploited by the warlords. Convening more conferences that always yield the same results, as has been the case over the last 10 years is not the remedy. If we continue to entertain the notion of holding yet more of the so-called national reconciliation conferences indefinitely, or into the next decade, in search of peace in Somalia, then we are, in effect, saying that Somali civil society is condemned to an uncertain future, because the international community is not prepared to protect it from criminal elements that usurped power. Despite the "legitimacy" wrongly accorded them by the international community, they have never agreed, and will never agree, on anything. Trying to appease the warlords has never succeeded and never will.

The Somalis, too, have human rights; they have the same right as others to be protected from oppressive, malicious and power-hungry individuals who continually and freely move from one capital to another, raising funds and securing armaments. Although these individuals are responsible for the destruction of their country, for the deaths of tens of thousands of innocent civilians, countless numbers of casualties and for the paralysis that immobilizes the country to this day, the international community did not intervene in Somalia, "to defend humanitarian principles and to stand up for the values of civilization and justice", as one Western leader stated in justifying the Kosovo operation. The United Nations Operation in Somalia was also saddled with ambiguities in its mandate and there was never an intention to rid the country of the warlords.

Furthermore, Kosovo represents a clear case of determined and vigorous action to achieve a specific objective — to drive the marauding Serb army from Kosovo. Furthermore, the United Nations operation in Kosovo is vested with unprecedented power, because the circumstances warrant the exercise of nearly sovereign powers. It has authority over the territory, the people of Kosovo, the legislative and the executive powers of Kosovo, including the administration of the judiciary system. That mandate is a far cry from that in Somalia; but then Somalia is not Kosovo.

We all agree that the current level of fragmentation cannot be allowed to continue. Many ideas have been floated in the past, but none of these will succeed or even survive as long as the warlords have the luxury of determining the fate of Somalia. Indeed, they continue to exercise a veto over the restoration of peace and national authority. The question remains, for how many more years will Somali society have to wait until the warlords accept a power-sharing coalition? Until a final victor emerges? For ever?

Liberia was reconstituted through strong international efforts. Warlords of varying levels of power and support eventually submitted to international pressures and accepted independent, internationally supervised democratic elections, followed by the implementation of agreements during a year of transition carried out under the leadership of an individual — in fact, a woman — not affiliated with any of the warlords. The elections were described as "free and fair", and Liberians were thus able to bid farewell at last to a destructive and intractable conflict. This was indeed an exemplary process in which the Economic Community of West African States, supported by the United Nations, played a leading role.

Since the outbreak of the Somali crisis some 10 years ago, the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and our subregional organization, as well as many countries, both within and outside the region, have tried to salvage that nation from mayhem, anarchy and political paralysis through all kinds of conferences, meetings and contacts with and among the warlords. Sadly, however, the warlords have repeatedly demonstrated their unwillingness to heed the international community's call to put the good of the country above their individual lust for power and control.

We have to ask ourselves, as leaders of the world assembled here, what should be done about Somalia. The time has come, in our view, for the international community to take a decision to break the long silence on this forgotten conflict by supporting bold, decisive measures against the warlords.

That is why, after deep reflection and after taking into account all relevant factors, I felt compelled to set out before the Assembly today a series of proposals and phased measures that would be the expression of our outrage, frustration and impatience with the status quo perpetuated by the warlords.

The first phase has to do with the fact that the warlords, as I have described with great sorrow, have failed on every count during this long, intractable civil war. Thus, I am loath to support yet another conference

held for these men who have completely lost the confidence of their people. It is time Somali civil society — including intellectuals, artists and mothers — assumed responsibility.

The Somali people has matured politically during these years of suffering and knows what it needs: economic prosperity and social progress in a context of democracy, liberty and peace.

In line with the wishes of the Somali people, Djibouti is embarking upon measures intended: to enhance and strengthen Somali's confidence in themselves, in each other and in their common destiny; to make a real contract of trust and progress between the actors of economic, social, cultural and intellectual life; and to implement with determination, serenity and equity the work of rehabilitation, political, economic and administrative normalization and the promotion of the culture of dialogue between the Somali people in order to create a lasting environment of dialogue for the emergence of a new generation of decision makers.

In order for Djibouti to have confidence in the Somali people's responsibility for its future, Somali citizens must finally be given the right to speak out so that they can restore the essential values of liberty, truth, justice, responsibility and transparency. By working for and basing themselves on Somali civil society through the holding of a genuine reconciliation conference, the representatives of the Somali people, including the warlords, will be committing themselves to the path of peace and national reconciliation.

We seek a Somalia led and governed by the best people drawn from all generations, in particular people who inspire confidence because of their commitment to law, justice, freedom and peace; those who will govern with a view to fulfilling a mandate that can be withdrawn at any time in accordance with the requirements of the common good; those who do not think only of profiting by the misfortune of their brethren to gain a scrap of power no matter what the cost to the Somali nation. Somalia needs those men and women who in spite of everything have retained their ethical values, the force of their personalities and their intellectual and spiritual dynamism: free men and women who are ready to offer their fellow Somalis a credible way out of their tragedy that will be consistent with the cultural heritage and collective memory of the Somali people.

The reconciliation conference must give rise to agreement and commitment by all Somalis to the following principles. First, there must be acceptance of the basic principle that the Somali people is free to exercise its democratic right to select its own regional and national leaders in accordance with a time-frame of its own choosing. Secondly, the warlords must agree to convert their factions into political parties that can compete in elections if they choose to do so. Thirdly, the warlords must agree to the complete and verifiable disarmament of their fighters. Fourthly, the warlords must submit to the primacy of law. Fifthly, the warlords must accede to the international community's request to participate in the restoration of normalcy, law and order, and a framework for governance. And finally, a national police force must be established, one that will represent the entire Somali community and that can incorporate the various militias, which will have the opportunity to participate in it.

Here I should say that some countries in or outside of the Horn of Africa, which in one way or another are fueling the conflict in Somalia, must reconsider their positions. These countries are pursuing narrow national interests by supporting the profusion of warlords in various ways, and they are only prolonging the agony and privation of Somali civil society. I call on all actors in the civil war to review their priorities with a view to achieving peace in Somalia. It is time that they controlled themselves: high time.

When they can agree that the warlords fully support or accept the parameters of phase one, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United Nations and the countries of the region must work together to help Somalia in its transition to democracy. As in Guinea-Bissau, the United Nations should establish a post-conflict peace-building office in Somalia to initiate projects in support of this process, including by coordinating and monitoring the holding of legislative and presidential elections.

I turn now to phase two. If the warlords place insurmountable obstacles on the road to peace, the international community will have to shoulder its responsibility and demonstrate robustly that it cannot let the persecution of Somali civilians continue indefinitely without taking action. The warlords must in that case be prosecuted for crimes against humanity: for abuse of power, especially through the unjustified persecution of civilians; for flagrant violations of human rights; and for having caused the collapse of the State and the destruction of their country. With their unabated violence and their erratic behaviour, the warlords have stolen the childhood from Somalia's young people; they have

deprived their nation of hope and of a future; they have condemned their people to a precarious existence.

Moreover, harsh and targeted punishment must be meted out to warlords who do not agree to the international community's demand that peace and a framework for governance be restored in Somalia: they must be confined to their bleak and battered areas; they must be banned from freely traveling abroad to further their sinister designs; all foreign support and all assistance, whether monetary or material, must be banned; and all their assets, in all forms and wherever they are located, must be frozen.

Turning to phase three, if the measures set out in the first two phases cannot achieve the objectives because of obstruction by the warlords, we would be faced with two difficult choices: We could continue to remain indifferent and to do nothing about the decade-old siege of Somalia; or organizations to which Somalia belongs, first and foremost the Organization of African Unity and the League of Arab States, with support from the United Nations and from other countries, could decide that they were obliged to resolve the situation by using all necessary means on the principle that no State — or criminal warlord in this case — may continue indefinitely to commit flagrant violations of human rights and to hold a country hostage forever.

Those are the critical scenarios we need to discuss, because, however much one might wish to forget Somalia, it will not just go away. We must do something to remedy the situation, and we must do it as quickly as possible.

Let me reiterate that we must put an end to the complacency we have displayed towards the warlords, and that Somali civil society must be more closely involved in any future process.

It is important to note that the situation is not the same in all regions of the country; anarchy does not prevail everywhere. Somalia has many contrasting faces depending on the region. While disorder reigns in areas of the centre and the South, northern regions such as the self-proclaimed states of Somaliland and Puntland are enjoying relative peace and stability. Those two areas fortunately escaped most of the conflict that ravaged the country in the 1990s. They have made a great effort to strengthen security and, with very little outside assistance, have carried out admittedly limited economic reconstruction programmes. The international community has thus far been wary of providing meaningful assistance, on the pretext that the political and security situation makes it impossible.

As we meet here today, communities in many towns and regions are organizing to determine their own future. This trend towards decentralization or self-administration is based on the strong determination of the Somalis not to succumb, but rather to survive. The international community is duty-bound to provide economic support for these regions and communities that have achieved relative peace, security and the beginnings of development: near- normalcy. The international community should reward those who are trying to provide their people with basic services, including an institutional framework and mine-clearance efforts.

I am grateful to the Secretary-General, who has placed the question of Somalia high on the international agenda, and to United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme and their partners, who have provided food and care to the Somali people despite the risks for the safety of their personnel. But these praiseworthy efforts seem to be showing some fatigue, even frustration, because of inadequate support from donors, as reflected in the lukewarm response to the 1999 United Nations appeal. We urge the international community to continue to help the Somali people during these times, which are particularly difficult due in part to the long drought, further exacerbated by the ongoing civil war.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Djibouti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ismail Omar Guelleh, President of the Republic of Djibouti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Echeverría, President of the Republic of Costa Rica

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Costa Rica.

Mr. Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Echeverría, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Costa Rica, His Excellency

Mr. Miguel Ángel Rodríguez Echeverría, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rodríguez Echeverría (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this General Assembly, a truly global parliament where all mankind is represented and finds expression in its diversity and its fundamental unity. Your election and your personal qualities honour your country and your region.

I would like to congratulate also the delegations of Kiribati, Tonga and Nauru, and through them their Governments and peoples, on their recently becoming Members of this Organization. We are convinced that they will contribute constructively and positively to the work of the United Nations, and that their presence here reaffirms the universal and democratic vocation of the General Assembly.

We are holding this session at a transcendental moment in human history. At the threshold of a new century and a new millennium, it is timely for the peoples of the world to reflect on the future of our countries and of the international system. Facing the new millennium, we must draw lessons from the era that we are leaving behind, in which we learned all the good and all the evil that we can do. We saw the first man walking on the moon, the end of apartheid in South Africa and peace agreements signed in Central America; but we witnessed also the consequences of the nuclear mushroom cloud and the aberration of the Holocaust, ethnic conflicts and local wars which in the last 40 years have caused more deaths than the two world wars together. We have seen the bright-lights of democracy and freedom, but also the deep shadows of poverty and the violation of human rights.

This has been a century of great contrasts. While in some parts of the globe peace is signed, in others war is never ending. While thousands of millions live in poverty, a small group lives in opulence. While we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in many parts of the world gross violations of human dignity are committed. Yes, this has been a century of many contrasts. It has given us plenty of reasons to be proud, but it has also made us ashamed of the cruelty and hardness of the human heart. For these reasons we should never forget the lessons of the twentieth century.

In the context of these lessons, we, the 188 nations gathered here — each with its own flag and symbols, each with its own political, commercial and strategic interests, each with its own problems, suffering, visions and dreams — express our readiness to take up the challenges of the new century, which must take shape, beginning now, as the century of human rights and human development.

For these reasons, we have to recognize that the greatest failure of the United Nations and the international community in recent years has been the persistence of cruel armed conflicts and civil wars, which cause continued humanitarian crises and prevent the peaceful development of nations. The real victims of war are the displaced and refugee children and elderly, the raped women, the youngsters killed, the workers whose workplaces are destroyed, the students whose schools are bombed and the sick who cannot receive treatment. While war persists, human rights cannot be respected.

In this sense, we condemn the atrocities committed in East Timor against the civilian population, and we join the whole world in demanding that its will, democratically expressed, be respected. We view with satisfaction the quick action of the Security Council, which will allow for the deployment of an international peacekeeping force in that Territory in order to prevent a greater humanitarian crisis. In retrospect, this crisis teaches us that the international community must be willing to actively and promptly support the processes that it initiates.

Regarding the situation in the Middle East, we watch with hope the progress in the search for a peaceful and definitive solution on the basis of full compliance with the Oslo accords. We acknowledge the tireless efforts of President Barak, of Israel, and President Arafat, of the Palestinian Authority, and their commitment to peace and the future of their peoples.

I would like to express my condolences to the people of the Republic of China on Taiwan for the tragic earthquake that devastated its territory on Monday, 20 September, and the recent after-shock. My most heartfelt sympathy goes to the families of the victims and the injured.

Costa Rica has a firm relationship with the Republic of China on Taiwan. We admire its shared economic progress, its respect for human rights and its democracy, much promoted by President Lee. Our deep commitment to the cause of peace prompts us to view with concern the growing differences and instability in the region during the last year. We fear that these threaten peace

and might unleash a new armaments race. For this reason, we trust that the differences will be resolved through constructive dialogue and negotiation in good faith, with respect for the interests of the whole Chinese people.

We must remember that the United Nations was established with precisely the mandate of eradicating the scourge of war, and it must again take the lead in the maintenance of international peace and security. Costa Rica therefore supports the efforts to reform the Security Council, which cannot be limited simply to an increase in the number of its members, even if this might be useful. Rather, the reform effort must centre on the Council's revitalization.

Fifty years ago Costa Rica abolished its army. In line with this example, it has advocated disarmament throughout the history of the United Nations, in order to build a world of progress and peace. The abolition of the army allowed our society to become an example of dialogue, respect and the peaceful coexistence of all social groups. Costa Rica actively promotes demilitarization because it knows its extraordinary benefits for human development; in this context, we have proposed the creation of a fund for the demilitarization of Central America, as well as the strengthening of, and full compliance with, the mechanisms of international law, in order to guarantee international peace and security and respect for human rights throughout the world.

Costa Rica considers that humanitarian crises are in themselves threats to international peace and security. When they arise, the United Nations and the Security Council must not attempt to avoid their responsibility, whatever reasons are invoked. Nowadays any massive violation of human rights, any humanitarian emergency, requires the coordinated action of the international community, through this Organization. For there to be justice at the global level, the rule of law and full compliance with the principles that gave birth to the United Nations must prevail.

In this context, we recall the importance of the prompt establishment of the International Criminal Court, and thus call on all States that have not yet done so to sign the Statute with a view to its prompt ratification, and we reiterate the need to accelerate the negotiations on its rules of procedure. Costa Rica hopes to receive promptly the final text in order to proceed to its ratification.

Furthermore, we must recognize that conflicts and crises are multifaceted and that they present a series of political, military and economic problems. In this context, action undertaken by the United Nations must be designed not only to re-establish peace in military terms but also to re-establish peace in terms of social justice, democracy and development. The actions taken by this Organization should not be centred only on the Security Council but must actively include the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Development Programme as participants in the peace-building process.

My people's manifest desire is for the new century to be truly the century of human rights and human development. I would like to express to the international community the desire of a people that, since the nineteenth century, has been building the foundation of a far-sighted society by balancing in a single equation respect for human rights, freedom, peace, active tolerance, fraternity, democracy and solidarity.

The end of the cold war, the knowledge-based economy, awareness of gender issues, an understanding of the rights of the persons with disabilities and of minorities, respect for the rights of the future generations and for environmental protection, and the processes of globalization have all begun to delineate a new human order: a twenty-first century with a more human mankind. In this new context, which is just now showing its initial characteristics, the human development agenda and the human rights agenda must coincide and complement each other. The twenty-first century is taking shape as that in which individuals and peoples will demand the right to human development, which is nothing more than the appropriate implementation and effectiveness of the institutions of freedom: human rights, the rule of law, pluralism, competition, solidarity and harmony with nature.

It is at once a right and a duty to take part, actively, creatively and jointly, in the creation of such development, because the twenty-first century is called upon to be the century of high-intensity citizenship. Male and female citizens are, together with the State and the international community, the creators of their own opportunities and the builders of their own development. Passivity is a thing of the past.

We in Costa Rica who are part of this change greatly value the foresight and sense of responsibility of our forefathers, which have made of our small motherland the second-ranking country in Latin America in terms of human development and the oldest and most

stable democracy in the region. Even as early as the end of the nineteenth century, Costa Ricans enjoyed the continent's highest levels of education and health, thanks to the country's far-sighted devotion to education, the rule of law, democracy, social solidarity and international trade. Since the early days of our independent and republican life, solidarity and human rights, in their fullness, have been a way of life for us Costa Ricans. Not in vain was our first Constitution called the "Covenant of Harmony". Thus, last year when hurricane Mitch devastated Central America, in the midst of the pain over the loss of Costa Rican lives and the serious economic damage, we also took on the suffering of our Central American brothers and sisters. We were side by side with them, sharing with them our food, medicine and territory.

Faithful to its humanitarian tradition, Costa Rica implemented the most generous immigration policy put forward by any nation in recent years, giving hundreds of thousands of illegal immigrants from the region — amounting to more than 10 per cent of our population — the opportunity to normalize their situation with a minimum of requirements, as well as the opportunity to enjoy full equality with our nationals in access to our social welfare institutions. We hope that other countries that are sought out by immigrants because of war, poverty, natural catastrophes and ethnic conflicts will follow this example.

Our country is making great efforts to look after these hundreds of thousands of immigrants; therefore, we reiterate our need to be helped so that we can strengthen the health, education and basic-services systems that we use in order to meet their needs.

At this end of the century, it has been my task to promote vital transformations for the future of our small nation. We are protecting human beings even before they are born. We are fighting against child labour and the sexual exploitation of minors. We are opening havens for our adolescent mothers, and we are fighting the aggression suffered by women in many homes the world over. We are strengthening the family, providing it with more and better opportunities. We are working in favour of the rights of elder adults and those of workers, in order to deepen our social achievements of the 1940s and to guarantee a retirement pension in old age as a universal human right.

Costa Rica is today acknowledged to be the healthiest society in Latin America, with high levels of computer literacy. It is the oldest democracy on the continent and a leader in the conservation and protection of the environment. Its human development levels are comparable to those of developed countries. Nevertheless, we face serious problems that prevent us from indulging in misguided self-congratulation.

We are aware that progress in the field of development depends on our own actions and on the international context. Human, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights have equal importance and complement one another. Having acknowledged the indivisibility and interdependence of these rights, it is a matter of concern that there is still some reluctance to accept the right of all nations to human development.

The awarding of the Nobel Prize to Amartya Sen for his work on the welfare economy and on the understanding of poverty, inequality and hunger reminds us that global development must include the fight against inequalities and extreme poverty. This, however, must not be a struggle in which developed countries take part only out of a feeling of human solidarity; rather, it must be a struggle that involves the entire system of nations through the creation of appropriate instruments and mechanisms for action that offer opportunities for development through trade and investment. We welcomed the views of Harvard University economist Jeffrey Sachs — published recently in *The Economist* and supported yesterday by President Clinton and today by Vice-Chancellor Fischer of Germany — regarding the urgent need to establish new mechanisms to ensure the necessary resources for the purchase of medicines and vaccines to combat tropical diseases, thus securing their development and ensuring their distribution to the poorest and most helpless sectors of mankind.

Costa Rica has spoken out to have the international economic order allow the development of those countries that are lagging behind. If we do not take action in this direction, the conditions necessary for the long-term maintenance of international peace and security will not be created. We have constantly advocated a more just and equitable economic and commercial order, one that will provide all nations with access to the benefits of the globalization process and that will provide small developing States with better opportunities to enter into commercial agreements. Before the European Union we have also advocated secure and tariff-free access for Latin American agricultural products to the European Union markets, whose protectionism costs Latin America $4.223 billion dollars annually.

In order to promote the development of small States, it is indispensable to establish open trade systems so that

trade and investment can become engines of economic growth and so that more and better opportunities for employment will be created in a region that suffers poverty and unemployment.

The developed countries' trade restrictions are barriers to our human development, as are the policies of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to restrict supplies of oil and to raise its price artificially at a time when the traditional exports of Latin America are suffering a dramatic slump in prices.

On the other hand, the nations gathered here face the challenge of building an international financial system that will protect small States from economic crises. Small economies do not cause the crises, but we do suffer their adverse effects and we have not received the necessary support to face them. To correct this situation, Costa Rica proposes the creation of a precautionary fund with a flexible and speedy financial mechanism to solve the financial emergencies of small and vulnerable States, which are frequently forgotten by the international financial community because of their limited global impact.

As a country that has succeeded in building a culture of protecting and preserving the environment, we stress, as we did at the summit between Europe and Latin America held this year in Rio de Janeiro, the urgent need to build an international system that will reward those who protect the environment and penalize those who contaminate or destroy it. Currently, my country is developing a system of payments to the owners of forests for environmental services and more than one fourth of our territory is protected in reservations or national parks. Costa Rica reiterates the need to take action to better apply the Kyoto Protocol; to make greater use of new markets; and to determine efficiently the costs of pollution and the profits of preservation in order to maintain the sustainable use of natural resources.

Jointly with Norway, we performed the first global transaction of certificates of greenhouse-gases reduction. This mechanism should receive the support of all countries, not only in order to apply the right to human and sustainable development in each country, but also to extend the life of the human species on our planet. Let us recall that, in this task, the obligations are shared but differentiated. It is time to move from words to deeds.

It is clear that, if financial systems of broader coverage are not established; if more open trade schemes are not implemented; if protectionism by developed countries, which limits our access to their markets, is not reduced; and if the global benefits of our forests are not recognized, developing countries will see a decline in their opportunities for economic growth; inequalities will increase; poverty will further deepen; political stability and social peace will be threatened; the loss of natural resources will rise; and illegal immigration towards developed nations will intensify, all creating an environment of instability and uncertainty harmful to the new millennium.

Wanting the developed countries to recognize the right to human development of small countries is not utopian. It is the real aspiration of those peoples that have faced with meagre resources the tragedies of wars and the wrath of nature. Solidarity and fraternity among nations must be genuine. The twenty-first century awaits us. Let us all join hands. Humankind must enter this new age united. The twenty-first century must be the century of human rights — the century of human development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Costa Rica for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Miguel Angel Rodríguez Echeverría, President of the Republic of Costa Rica, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Suriname.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Suriname, His Excellency Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wijdenbosch: First of all, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my warm congratulations on your election to the helm of our General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. We are confident that, in view of your long experience in the affairs of our Organization, we may look forward to a fruitful and constructive year for

the work of the General Assembly and its Main Committees.

Allow me also to thank Mr. Didier Opertti, who led the General Assembly at its fifty-third session with remarkable distinction and efficiency.

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, we wish to express our sincere gratitude for his dynamic leadership and his continued efforts to promote durable peace and security.

Furthermore, I would like to join previous speakers in welcoming the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations family.

The ongoing globalization process has increased the influence of markets, benefiting a small group of countries, their corporations and people. At the same time, it has marginalized the majority of developing nations, in particular the small and vulnerable ones, undermining decades-long efforts by these countries to create economic well-being, social justice and sustainable human development.

It has, furthermore, eroded trade preferences and challenged and undermined the basic principles of international cooperation. It has also eroded international commitments to financing for development through the non-fulfilment of agreed targets of official development assistance and through the reduction in contributions to the core resources of the different programmes and funds of the United Nations system.

The drop in prices of primary commodities to their lowest level in a century and a half and the reduction of official development assistance have brought many Governments in developing countries face to face with the dangers of not being in a position to address in a satisfactory manner the just socio-economic demands of their respective peoples. In many cases, this has triggered social unrest and political instability and hampered efforts to achieve sustainable development.

Access to financing for development has been rendered more difficult, since the flow of private capital resources has been limited to certain regions and to a few developing countries, resulting in a further widening of the gap between developed and the majority of developing countries. As a consequence of this widening gap, poverty continues to rise, leading to increased migration, environmental deterioration, political conflicts and instability, which eventually will have long-term negative consequences not only for developing, but for developed countries as well.

The international community therefore has a moral obligation to ensure that these negative influences of globalization are contained so that the benefits of globalization are shared among all nations. It must also guarantee special and differential treatment to small, vulnerable developing countries in the international system. Such treatment must, specifically, extend to the financial, monetary and trading system, in order to support these countries in successfully adjusting to the demands of globalization.

The traffic in illegal drugs has become a serious threat to the national security of many nations, in particular the small and vulnerable ones such as Suriname, because it promotes violence, corruption, money-laundering and illegal arms trafficking. In this way, countries can be manoeuvred into dangerous waters and be accused of interference in the internal affairs of others. It has become practically impossible for Suriname, with its limited resources, to combat this scourge on its own. We are therefore actively pursuing bilateral agreements with friendly nations to assist us in this difficult task. In this context, I would mention the agreement on cooperation in maritime law enforcement which we recently signed with the Government of the United States of America. We will continue to work closely with our neighbours, with friendly nations and with the relevant regional and international institutions to contribute to the ongoing fight to eradicate this evil from our region.

The information superhighway, the Internet, is nowadays the means of choice for the exchange of information, with a great impact on the social and economic life of the international community. This new form of technology offers great possibilities for accelerated development in many fields. At the same time, however, we should note that the development of this technology involves the risk of further marginalizing vulnerable economies.

In addition to the positive effects of the Internet, we see that the adverse effects on trade, the ever widening gap in the field of education, the threat to social and cultural values and the abuse of this technology by people with malicious intentions often cause great concern in third world societies. I am convinced that in applying

innovative technology, equal attention should be given to the negative effects for societies with limited or no access to it.

I therefore urge the United Nations to ensure that this disparity, with its far-reaching consequences in the socio-economic, educational and cultural fields, is eliminated by augmenting the availability of and access to this technology. Furthermore, it is of great importance to set up a legal framework to prevent the abuse and crime which can emanate from use of the Internet.

The Surinamese Government is of the opinion that its foreign policy must be fully at the service of its social and economic development. In our view, the State should no longer fulfil the role it has traditionally performed of bearing full responsibility for development strategies and acting as a dirigiste and sometimes even as a welfare State: development requires a State which is effective, fulfils the role of catalyst and facilitator, and encourages and complements the activities of the private sector.

Good governance is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity. In addition, I should say that without an effectively operating State it would be impossible, from both the economic and the social points of view, to implement a policy for sustainable development. For development does not presuppose that there will be only the appropriate economic, social and technical inputs: in today's world, sustainable development and welfare can be attained only if regulations in a country are supportive so that the State can contribute to the effectiveness of the intended development.

It is my Government's objective to develop our natural resources in cooperation with identified partners in the international community in such a manner that the environment and the ecosystem will be preserved for future generations. In this light, may the unique decision by Suriname to offer almost 10 per cent of its territory as a gift to humankind by creating a nature reserve of nearly 1.16 million hectares, serve as an example. The environment and its biodiversity shall, especially in this nature reserve, always be fully protected.

The Government of Suriname is convinced that effective democratic structures are fundamental to a satisfactory enjoyment of democracy, so conditions have been created for the fullest development of Suriname's citizens. Since the beginning of its period of administration, the Government has devoted itself to strengthening democratic institutions and anchoring the rule of law. Law and justice, and effective institutions to implement them, are the basis for the comprehensive and balanced development of the nation.

My Government's policy is aimed also at promoting and safeguarding fundamental human rights and freedoms. Thus, we are creating ideal conditions for the optimal employment of human and natural resources in the interests of the development of our nation. We realize that democracy, development, peace and social progress do not enjoy special attention only within the borders of Suriname, but that the international community, more particularly the United Nations, thoroughly examines, promotes and safeguards them.

On 25 May 2000, the Surinamese people will decide, through general and free elections by secret ballot, on the appointment of a national Government at the highest level of State. My Government and the independent institutions designated by law are engaged in preparations for the approaching elections. In this respect, we know we have the support of the Organization of American States and the United Nations, as well as other international organizations. Talks on possible financial assistance by the European Union are in a phase of conclusion. The primary goal of the Government is to hold general and free elections, with the greatest possible care, by secret ballot, and once again to confirm to the world Suriname's excellent reputation in this field.

Our world is closing this millennium, in which humankind has made enormous progress in science and technology, enhancing its capacity for its own security and survival. The millennium has been an era of untold human suffering caused by wars waged between and within States, with the means capable of destroying all that which the human race has so far achieved. It has also been an era in which many developing countries gained constitutional independence. Unfortunately, however, it has not brought them economic independence and hence actual decolonization. Consequently, their full participation in developments relating to the formation of economic blocs was seriously impeded.

This millennium has also seen the birth of a unique world Organization, the United Nations, to assist us in overcoming the threat of complete destruction. Let us allow this unique instrument to assist humanity in achieving its noble desire for a peaceful world — a world with equitable economic, trade and development systems; a world with a protected and safe environment and

ecosystem; a world in which human rights and fundamental freedoms are protected, promoted and guaranteed to all its citizens; a world with adequate development opportunities for everyone; a world in which human potential can be fully developed, irrespective of race, sex, creed or religion; and a world from which all tendencies and signals regarding recolonization originating from former colonizers are banished.

Let us all, upon entering the new millennium, contribute wholeheartedly to these noble goals.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Suriname for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jules Albert Wijdenbosch, President of the Republic of Suriname, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Federated States of Micronesia.

Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, His Excellency Mr. Leo A. Falcam, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Falcam: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr. Gurirab, on your assumption of the office of President of this body. My Government hails the selection of a distinguished leader from a new developing nation to lead the General Assembly into the new millennium. We are also confident that you will live up to the high standards of your esteemed predecessor, Mr. Opertti.

It is with pride that I congratulate and extend a welcome to our Pacific island neighbours — the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the great Kingdom of Tonga — on their admission into the United Nations family. This represents a large contribution from our region to the attainment of a key goal of the United Nations system, that of universality.

I want to extend the sincere condolences of the people of the Federated States of Micronesia for the earthquakes in Turkey, Greece and, more recently, in Taiwan.

We are saddened by the violence in East Timor as its people seek to exercise their right to self-determination.

We also feel deep sympathy for the innocent families in Russia, exposed to merciless bomb attacks, and for those people in all regions of the world who are suffering today from violence, terrorism and violations of human rights.

Condolences are also in order on the recent death of His Majesty Hassan II of Morocco. His strong personal contributions to the process of achieving peace in the Middle East will be remembered.

As Chairman of the South Pacific Forum, I am privileged to deliver the following remarks on behalf of its 16 member countries.

The South Pacific Forum is a unique organization centred on the Heads of Government of 16 Pacific nations which share a very special part of the world: the vast expanses of ocean and islands in the central and western Pacific, both north and south of the Equator. Forum member countries vary greatly in land area, ocean area, population, resource endowment, economic development, social structures, language and culture. However, we all share a common bond as Forum members and have established consensus positions, which transcend our diversity, on a wide range of issues. We have also agreed to work together in pursuit of regional stability and towards the well-being of our people. Fourteen of these Forum members are small island developing States. Much work has been done to assist these smaller members in their pursuit of sustainable development. Such initiatives are reflected in proposals by the Forum's Ministers of economics, for extensive economic reforms. Recently, Forum trade Ministers made ground-breaking recommendations on trade initiatives which include the establishment of a Pacific free trade area consistent with the rules and standards of the World Trade Organization. These recommendations will be considered by the Forum heads of Government at their annual meeting in Palau next month.

Past practice has been for the formal statement from each annual meeting, known as the Forum Communiqué, to be offered for inclusion as a document of the General Assembly. As the meeting this year will take place after the conclusion of the general debate, a request for inclusion of the Forum Communiqué from the Palau meeting will be made at a later date.

Last year, at their meeting in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia, all 16 Forum leaders reaffirmed their endorsement of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The leaders saw the Programme of Action as a comprehensive framework with great potential for the region, and commended implementation efforts already under way at the national and regional levels.

In this regard, Forum leaders strongly supported the General Assembly initiative to hold, next week, the special session to review progress under the Barbados Programme of Action. Forum countries have maintained close involvement with the preparatory process for the special session, and appreciate the strong focus on the concerns of small island developing States in the work of United Nations bodies such as the Commission on Sustainable Development. We look forward to outcomes from the special session that will bring a new and stronger focus on our needs in the pursuit of sustainable development, and step up the pace of measures to implement the Barbados Programme of Action.

The common need for accelerated and sustainable economic development remains a major focus among the Forum member countries; in fact, the Forum itself has for some time been implementing what is known as the Forum Economic Action Plan. The Plan attempts to address regional concerns, which are echoed in the Barbados Programme of Action. Forum members feel that the advancement of this collective, regional Plan is a constructive response to the mandate for regional action expressed in the Barbados Programme.

In the context of overall economic development planning and assistance and of social and ecological concerns, Forum members continue to maintain a keen interest in having the United Nations adopt a vulnerability index. The existing criteria for determining eligibility for concessional aid and trade treatment and for critical classifications such as least developed country status are purely macroeconomic, without any consideration of the environmental and natural risks we face, as a region, on a daily basis. Regional work has already begun under the South Pacific Geoscience Commission on developing an environmental vulnerability index. Only by encompassing social and environmental factors within its assessments will the international community be able to achieve equity when addressing the special circumstances and needs of small island developing countries. We appreciate the continuing discussion of this matter by the Commission on Sustainable Development, including at its most recent session, and call for tangible action by the year 2000.

In last year's general debate, the Forum expressed renewed hopes for the United Nations process to combat anthropogenic global warming, sea-level rise and other adverse effects of global climate change. We took a measure of pride that our group, which includes both Annex I and developing countries, found common ground at the political level to call for effective action, despite the widely differing circumstances of member States. It seemed that with the successful negotiation of the Kyoto Protocol, the world's nations had finally recognized the need to begin taking action, on the basis of legally binding commitments, to achieve specified targets and timetables. Forum members were also relieved by the recognition that small island developing States have particular needs for assistance with adapting to the effects of climate change. We welcomed the formulation of specific tools, such as the Clean Development Mechanism, which promise to be useful in enabling island countries to do their part in combating combat climate change, within the framework and parameters of our own national circumstances.

There is of course no time to be lost. People everywhere are experiencing the sometimes disastrous effects of climate change. From record-setting droughts to killer floods, hurricanes and typhoons, the effects of sea-level rise are already taking a toll on small island States.

Unfortunately, even as scientific evidence of climate change has become impossible to ignore, the parties to the Convention have yet to go very far towards getting the Kyoto process under way. The political will of the Governments of the parties simply does not match the technical dedication of delegates to pursuing solutions at the numerous meetings that are taking place on this subject.

After attending the Conference of the Parties to the Convention last year in Buenos Aires, I came away with the impression that without a real sense of urgency the Convention might choke on its own complexity, to the delight of the minority that opposes it. Unless all countries align themselves with the Convention's purposes and take urgent collective action, we could find ourselves here at the seventy-fifth session of the General Assembly, without being any closer to meaningful implementation of the Convention. By that time, leaders would be expressing regret over a steadily growing list of climate-related disasters and watching the pile of sandbags along the FDR Drive outside as the tidal surges along the East River grow stronger. By that time, of course, most island nations in the Forum would have disappeared and we would have failed utterly. Discussing emission reductions would be a hollow gesture by then.

Even though our spirits are bolstered by the encouragement of our annex I Forum partners Australia and New Zealand, the 14 Forum small island States grow weary of calling attention to our special vulnerability to climate change and to our status on the front line of potential worldwide catastrophe. I would sincerely hope that by now a great majority of people, not only in the United Nations system but from all across the globe, have a strong mental picture of the helpless situation of low-lying islands and coastlines in the face of rising seas. We are very grateful for the considerable extent to which our pleas have been taken into account, but while we may flatter ourselves that we have served, in a way, as a voice of conscience for the Framework Convention on Climate Change, we wish also to make positive contributions to its implementation.

Thus, the emphasis of all Forum members now is to assure that we do our part to participate in and to advance the considerable amount of work that must be done. The South Pacific Regional Environmental Programme continues to serve our governments as a useful focal point and to provide valuable expertise. Forum countries have long been active in working to understand the potential of the Clean Development Mechanism for the region. The Republic of the Marshall Islands recently hosted an important workshop on the Clean Development Mechanism that was attended by more than 40 countries, and in June, Australia and the Forum secretariat hosted a workshop in Nadi.

We are severely hampered, however, by the shortage of personnel and financial resources to maintain continuous participation in the host of ongoing activities. The United Nations and bilateral donors have been very generous in supporting our attendance at conferences, but the time demands on our short-staffed officials at home and abroad can be overwhelming, considering other growing concerns such as biodiversity, the oceans and coral reefs.

I know that this problem is by no means unique to Forum island countries, nor even to small developing countries as a group. But for us, as well as for many others, we ask that these limitations should not be disregarded by larger countries and organizations in the management of the international agenda. Once again, we express sincere appreciation for the support of donors that have made our participation possible. In addition, we would emphasize the importance of applying a coordinated approach to scheduling in order to facilitate the participation of small delegations that would not wish to be marginalized by overlapping meetings on topics of critical concern to us.

Finally, another topic of concern for the Forum at the next annual meeting will be the continuing shipment by industrialized Powers of plutonium and radioactive wastes through our region. Forum nations have consistently expressed their concerns on this issue, especially about liability and compensation arrangements in the event of an accident. From 16 to 17 September this year, discussions took place in Suva between the legal experts of the Forum countries and the representatives of France, Japan and the United Kingdom concerning trans-shipments of nuclear materials through the region. This meeting was arranged by the Forum secretariat, in line with the 1998 Forum Communiqué. We are encouraged by this development and strongly urge the representatives of the three shipping States to demonstrate their readiness to explore innovative ways to address the concerns of Forum members: there is more at stake than the well-being and comfort of the larger populations in the North.

Putting this disregard for the sovereign interests of Forum countries to one side for a moment, the Pacific Ocean is a vital breadbasket for the entire planet: any accident will have serious and adverse implications far beyond our shores for generations to come.

Forum countries have derived some encouragement from the decision by France, Japan and the United Kingdom to consult with Forum members regarding safety and compensation arrangements for the most recent shipment of mixed oxide fuel from Europe to Japan. We are further encouraged by the decision of the three shipping States to provide information on the shipping

routes of the two ships carrying the fuel, consistent with the rigorous safety and security obligations with which they must comply under the international conventions governing transport of nuclear materials, including the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Materials.

We, the Forum countries, earnestly hope to make some inroads, not only in the immediate situation but, more importantly, in the long run, into the ethical consciences of the developed nations. Since time immemorial they have regarded our region as a convenient area for any kind of dangerous or undesirable activity that serves their interests at home. With the welcome admission to this body of three more of our number, we are now numerous enough in this forum to assert forcefully that we wish no further invasion to place our peoples at risk, irrespective of the reasons others may have for choosing to disregard our concerns.

I have by no means touched on every topic of concern that is to be discussed at the next Forum meeting. Following that meeting, as I stated earlier, the complete Communiqué will be submitted to this body, and I commend it to all delegations.

The views I have expressed on behalf of the South Pacific Forum are, of course, fully embraced by my country, the Federated States of Micronesia. I would like now to address other issues, speaking only for my own small island developing State.

Since 1991, when the Federated States of Micronesia was admitted to membership in this body, we have experienced — from the viewpoint of a developing country and particularly as a small island developing State — a truly unique decade in multilateral relations. We emerged on the international scene just in time to become a part of the movement that radically changed previous notions about development, namely the Rio process. The timing could not have been better for us. Just as we took up the task of formulating our own agenda for the future of our island nation, the world as a whole came to recognize that the issues of environment and development are not opposed but, rather, are intertwined. We thus incorporated into our development planning from the outset a mandate not just for development, but for sustainable development.

We feel fortunate in this regard and in how the principle of sustainability is fully integral to our activities, for, while we are deeply appreciative of the concerns that other nations have shown for the difficulties faced by small island States like ourselves, and while we remain anxious for the further implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action, we realize that the action referred to must be, first and foremost, our own. We ourselves must be very serious not only in recognizing our special development obstacles but in instituting and carrying out programmes to overcome them in a sustainable way. And this must be done, not as a temporary, short-term or even medium-term proposition, but as a way of life for generations to come.

No amount of outside assistance can provide sustainable development. As small-island countries, we must individually and collectively commit ourselves to staying the course once we have seen it and possess the means to navigate it. Without that commitment, our sails will never fill and we will remain adrift on a journey that can only come to a sad end.

As a new member of the international community, we have been faced with the need to rapidly become familiar with the dynamics of multilateral interaction within the United Nations system while at the same time trying to acquire a practical working knowledge of the various simultaneous processes. But there is no apprenticeship here at the United Nations.

From the outset, it has been our full responsibility to participate, on a basis of equality, in the ongoing work of numerous bodies directly integral to the United Nations or related to it. It has been, and continues to be, a demanding experience, but inasmuch as we have learned about others, we are also learning more about ourselves and moving towards greater maturity as a nation.

We have also developed a deep appreciation for the often unheralded but vital work of translating global problems into solutions that is pursued faithfully by the thousands of administrative and diplomatic members of the United Nations family. It is difficult to conceive of a future in which the nations of our ever-shrinking planet will not have a forum such as this — the United Nations.

Yet one cannot help but be uneasy on hearing whispers of discouragement as the United Nations is challenged by issues that seem to grow in number and complexity. We sometimes hear that perhaps the Organization has outlived its usefulness and has inadequate capacity to deal with global crises in the areas of security, social justice and the environment. Some are said to feel that other, more sharply focused bodies

would be better suited to dealing with the anticipated crises of the new millennium.

Without question, the effective responsiveness of this Organization is constantly being challenged. But this is not a sign of failure, nor of a lack of capacity. Neither does it suggest that we need another instrument. It is, rather, an indication of the growing interconnectedness of the global community, and of the growing inclination among nations to find and recognize their common interests and to work together to advance global peace and harmony.

In order to maintain and improve the responsiveness of the United Nations in a world of increasing demands and challenges, it is necessary that we continually evolve and adapt effectively in our pursuit of the ideals of the Charter of this Organization. Only in this way can we keep the Organization on a positive course and faithfully translate the mandates of the Charter into terms of continuing relevance. This is the attitude with which we must approach reform. It is not a consequence of inadequacy, which the word "reform" may suggest, but, rather, it is a positive and evolutionary process.

This is easily said, but, as we all know, it is very difficult to put into practice. Even so, we must not allow that high degree of difficulty to plunge us into frustration and defeat. The great achievements of those who have come before us in the last 54 years must be honoured by our unshakable determination to take the United Nations seriously into the next millennium as the single most effective multilateral instrument for the betterment of humankind.

If the United Nations is to maintain and even improve its capacity to deal with major issues and improve the lot of disadvantaged peoples, I respectfully suggest that there is a need for broader incorporation of developing countries in the decision-making process. More and more, it seems, a relatively small group of developed countries are seen on the front lines here and in other related international bodies. There is a perception that, despite the formal application of the rules, the substantive participation of developing countries in dealing with world problems is in reality waning rather than increasing. This does not bode well for the future of international relations. As the trend towards globalization continues to strengthen, this body as a whole will need to be more involved in making important decisions — not a permanent 5, not a G-7, but a "G-188".

Probably the single most urgently needed reform is the enlargement of the Security Council. Naturally, such an important step must not be taken in haste, but by this time we should be closer to finding an acceptable formulation. The plain fact is that the openness of the most powerful nations to accept rational and realistic change in the Security Council is a key indicator of the future of global multilateral relations in general, and of this Organization in particular. The impact of success with this issue would be felt in positive ways throughout the United Nations Organization, and it would stimulate renewed confidence in the Charter. That result alone is badly needed and should itself inspire greater effort to overcome the difficulties ahead.

It would be unrealistic to ignore the inevitability of the fact that larger, more powerful nations will most often take the lead in the United Nations. In fact, they should do so as a matter of responsibility; they possess the resources and the capacity. However, leadership should not become domination, and it should not leave the developing world marginalized. I therefore emphasize the need for a restructured Security Council. I also visualize a General Assembly that remains in the forefront of global decision-making, for real outcomes on real issues.

Being from a Pacific island nation, I naturally have particular concerns about our region. Without demeaning in any way the considerable attention that we do receive, I must say that the Pacific islands region often takes a back seat in the councils of the greater Powers, which are prone to include only the Pacific rim countries among their primary concerns. This can be understood, given our small populations and land masses, which only underscore our remoteness in the vast Pacific Ocean.

But it should not be forgotten that we Pacific islanders are custodians of some of the world's greatest untapped wealth. In the coming millennium, our region is certain to play a greater role than ever before in meeting the needs of the rest of the world for food and mineral resources. If these resources are to be conserved in the proper way and harvested in a sustainable manner, the peoples of the Pacific islands must be dealt with fairly, and on a basis of partnership with the developed world. And the time to start is now.

The growing global involvement with and reliance upon the tremendous resource base in our region must rest on a foundation of regional security. Nowhere is there a better example of the need for comprehensive security in the modern sense, extending beyond military

considerations and also including economic, social and environmental security.

This leads me to the present need for proper stewardship of the oceans and seas throughout the world. This subject was recently discussed in depth by the Commission on Sustainable Development, and it is on our agenda at this session. I want to emphasize that the Federated States of Micronesia solidly supports the positions expressed by the Alliance of Small Island States on this subject. We believe that oceans and seas present a special, even crucial, case for international cooperation and coordination, and that the General Assembly is the appropriate body to provide this oversight. Indeed, it was mandated to do so by Agenda 21.

Furthermore, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the framework for action in this area. We thus have existing structures; there is no need to create new institutions. We believe that the size of the task will require continuing effort on an annual basis, so that an ongoing working-group format within the context of preparations for each annual General Assembly will be more rewarding than a large, one-time conference. Above all, the process must seek the widest possible input, drawing upon expertise at the regional level, and providing assistance to ensure the participation of developing countries, especially small island States.

In these brief moments it is not possible to express all our views on all the matters we deem important. Of necessity, therefore, I must leave much to the work of our representatives in the Committees here and in other United Nations organs throughout the year.

I wish, however, to plead with this body for a universal awakening to the single most important reality of our lives today. This reality is that all our interests become more closely linked with each passing generation. We are all responsible for turning back the consequences of our past selfish behaviour. The destruction of war, the improper stewardship of our natural resources and the pollution of our living space are looming global disasters. Combined, they will overwhelm the Earth's population unless we find common ground and take action.

That common ground exists. It exists here. It does not ask us to surrender our nationhood or our cultures. It is the Charter of the United Nations, a visionary document that has guided our troubled world through the faltering steps of increasing multilateral awareness, and today provides a format for our very survival. God grant that we will have the political will to sustain it.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Federated States of Micronesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Leo A. Falcam, President of the Federated States of Micronesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Frederick Chiluba, President of the Republic of Zambia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Frederick Chiluba, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Zambia, His Excellency Mr. Frederick Chiluba, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chiluba: I join other speakers who have already addressed the Assembly, Sir, in congratulating you on your well-deserved election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. Your unanimous election is a clear demonstration of the confidence this Assembly has in you and in your country, Namibia, with which my country enjoys very friendly and warm relations. It is especially significant that you come from Namibia, a country whose independence stands as a crowning moment in our Organization's support for the right of peoples under colonial and foreign domination to self-determination and independence. I am confident that, given your experience and diplomatic skills, you will guide the work of this session successfully.

I wish to take this opportunity to commend your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for the able manner in which he presided over the fifty-third session.

In the same vein, I would like to place on record my country's deepest appreciation of the work of the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, whose leadership is well respected and has given new

impetus to the implementation of the United Nations reform programme.

As you rightly observed in your statement to this Assembly, Sir, the fifty-fourth session is the last to be convened in the twentieth century, a century that saw the creation of the United Nations from the ashes and ravages of the Second World War. Indeed, the world cannot but thank the founding fathers of our Organization for their foresight and wisdom. The relevance of this Organization has continued to grow since its inception, and is today exemplified by the universality of its membership, which has grown from the original 51 States in 1945 to the present 188 States.

It goes without saying that since the membership of the United Nations has been growing, there should have been a continuous and corresponding process of reform of the decision-making structures and processes of the Organization in order to make the world body as representative as possible. It is a matter of considerable disappointment, however, that while reform of the administrative structures has, to a large degree, been accomplished, reform of the Security Council has not moved in tandem.

As members are all aware, the creation of the United Nations was intended to strengthen international peace and security. Regrettably, a number of States continue to be threatened in our time by the dangerous proliferation of small arms and light weapons acquired by non-state entities. The continued proliferation and illegal transfer of small arms, among other factors, are responsible for the supply of the weapons being used in conflict situations across the African continent. I would therefore like to appeal to all Member States to support and strengthen the United Nations monitoring mechanisms on the transfer of these arms, particularly to non-state entities, in order to forestall this problem.

Related to the problem of small arms is the question of landmines planted in large tracts of land in many countries, rendering unusable what otherwise is productive land. The impact of landmines has also had a telling toll on the provision of social services in the affected countries. I equally appeal to Member States, parties to the United Nations Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, to implement the Maputo Declaration and programme of action, adopted in May this year. Only a strong and viable United Nations can constitute the much-needed viable vehicle to achieve this goal.

My delegation is therefore deeply concerned about the continued deterioration of the financial situation of the United Nations. This situation is well known to all of us in this Assembly, as it has been the focus of our discussions for the past five years. Reform of the United Nations will not be implemented effectively if the financial situation is not seriously addressed. It is the inescapable duty of all of us to honour our obligations by ensuring that we pay our assessed contributions in full, on time and without conditions. This will enable the Organization to function smoothly and more effectively to execute the mandate we have entrusted to it.

That among many other reasons is why we want to build strong economies in Africa to enable us shoulder our obligations. But external debt remains both a burden and a major impediment to the development process of many developing countries, including my country, Zambia. While we welcome the recent outcome of the Group of Eight meeting held in Cologne, Germany, on the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative, the measures for faster, broader and deeper debt relief, in our view, will not be sufficient to resolve the external debt problem of developing countries, especially the poorest among them, unless they are translated into real tangible, practical economic development programmes.

It is the view of my Government that the Group of Eight target for debt relief of about $100 billion for the poorest countries in the world, the majority of which are in Africa, will have little effect on the problem unless the terms of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative are further revised in such a way as to make them more flexible and better tailored to suit the specific conditions of the targeted countries.

Many of us in the developing countries understand that, in order to survive and contribute positively in the global markets, we need to make our economies more competitive. In this regard, many of our countries have embarked on the implementation of structural adjustment programmes. Our efforts are, however, hampered by the huge debt burden which takes away large amounts of resources from our countries through debt servicing. The declining levels of official development assistance and foreign direct investment to our countries, combined with the debt burden, have made economic reforms difficult

and have slowed down the pace of economic growth and development.

The solution to this is for all concerned to approach the question of debt with open minds, with a view to finding a lasting solution to the problem.

Added to that problem is the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is a matter of grave concern to my country and to Africa as a whole. This disease has continued to overwhelm the continent and to rob it of its meagre material and financial resources through devastation of its youthful and active population. It is therefore necessary for all humanity to rise to regard HIV/AIDS as a global problem and to act in unison. I therefore call upon the international community to redouble its efforts in fighting this scourge. Let me take this opportunity to report to this body that last week, from 12 to 16 September 1999, Zambia hosted the eleventh International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Africa. The holding of that Conference, which adopted a programme of action to fight the spread of this deadly disease in Africa in the twenty-first century, is among other things a demonstration of the African continent's commitment to fight against this deadly disease. It is my hope that the United Nations will therefore embrace the outcome of the Conference and provide the necessary leadership in the fight against this pandemic, which threatens the very survival of humankind. The AIDS problem deserves our collective moral and political will to combat it successfully.

Let me now turn to the phenomenon of the conflicts which have continued to bedevil Africa. In our own Southern African subregion, the conflicts in Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are not only a threat to peace and security but have also been a major impediment to the economic development of the region.

The resumption of hostilities in Angola in December 1998, after four years of relative peace following the signing of the Lusaka Protocol, is regrettable. As the Assembly is aware, this unfortunate state of affairs was occasioned by the intransigence of UNITA with regard to the implementation of the remaining tasks under the Lusaka Protocol. Every effort should therefore be made to bring an end to the hostilities.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Assembly will recall that on 2 August 1998 a conflict erupted in that country. In response to this serious development, a series of efforts by regional heads of State and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) were immediately undertaken in search of a peaceful solution to the conflict. At the summit held at Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, from 7 to 8 September 1998, the regional heads of State mandated me to chair the regional mediation effort, with the assistance of OAU.

For a period of almost a year, I have, on behalf of our region, carried out exhaustive consultations inside and outside Zambia, and convened a number of meetings at the level of experts and Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers.

Let me state here that, right from the outset, regional leaders acknowledged the need to involve the Congolese rebel movement in the mediation process to ensure that the outcome would be respected by and acceptable to all. The process initially engaged the rebel movement through a proximity mechanism. Later, however, the rebels, who now included the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), were invited to participate directly in the peace talks with all the other parties to the conflict.

On 10 July 1999, our perseverance on the regional and Pan-African levels finally paid off when heads of State of all the six States parties to the conflict signed the Ceasefire Agreement in Lusaka. Unfortunately, a split in the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) the previous May led to differences over who should sign the Agreement on behalf of the movement, which prevented them from appending their signature on that occasion. The other non-State party to the conflict, the MLC, also chose not to sign the Agreement until the differences within the RCD were resolved.

In order to secure the signatures of the RCD and the MLC, I was mandated by the regional heads of State to carry out further consultations with the two movements. I am pleased to inform the Assembly that these efforts culminated in the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement by the MLC and the RCD on 1 August and 31 August 1999 respectively.

Allow me at this juncture to place on record my sincere appreciation for the cooperation and assistance I received from all my colleagues in the region and other African leaders, the United Nations, OAU and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the execution of my mandate. The Ceasefire Agreement is an all-embracing document which addresses all aspects of the conflict, including the security concerns of all the

countries neighbouring the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I wish to inform the Assembly that the implementation process of the Agreement has already begun in earnest. Both the Political Committee and the Joint Military Commission met on 2 and 3 September 1999 in Lusaka with the participation of all members except the MLC, whose representatives were not able to travel to Lusaka because of logistical constraints.

Among the issues considered by the meetings were: first, the formal installation of the Chairman of the Commission, Brigadier-General Rachid Lallali, from Algeria; the budget of the Joint Military Commission; its structures; and its programme of work.

The representative of OAU briefed the meetings on OAU activities in support of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the United Nations representative briefed them on the relationship that is expected to prevail between the United Nations and the Joint Military Commission. The Commission is scheduled to meet again on 10 October 1999.

For peace to prevail in the Democratic Republic of Congo, United Nations support for the successful and comprehensive implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement is of paramount importance. For this reason, I wish to commend the Secretary-General for his timely and positive response in sending a team of military liaison personnel to the region. The United Nations must move more expeditiously than it has in the past if the job it does is to be commensurate with the tasks facing it in the field.

To this end, I make an earnest appeal to the United Nations that the Organization, first, should authorize and support the deployment of a United Nations peacekeeping force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo with an appropriate mandate and, on an appropriate scale, based on the assessed needs on the ground; second, it should quickly dispatch the technical survey team to the Democratic Republic of the Congo in addition to the team of military liaison personnel which has already been sent to that country and some of its neighbours; third, it should make available adequate resources for the peacekeeping mission; fourth, it should extend necessary and adequate support to facilitate the process of internal dialogue within the Democratic Republic of the Congo; fifth, it should help in the mobilization of humanitarian assistance for the Congolese refugees and internally displaced persons and facilitate their return and resettlement; and sixth, it should assist with resources for the economic reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I need not remind the Assembly of the solemn and important responsibility that the United Nations bears on behalf of us all in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is, therefore, incumbent upon it to ensure that peace prevails in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. To this end, it should learn from the lessons of the past and avoid costly mistakes.

Time is of the essence. What is equally of the essence is the need to address the root causes of the poverty confronting third world countries. The world community must tackle those root causes with speed and urgency.

This session of the General Assembly is meeting against a backdrop of growing tensions and armed conflicts, especially in the third world. These developments, coming towards the close of the twentieth century, are an indictment of the world's global structures, which pose today, more than at any other time in history, a challenge to the very articles of faith upon which this organization was founded. The challenges cannot be wished away, nor can they be remedied by empty words. Global poverty can be eradicated only with a concerted global programme. Solving the issue of poverty would solve the problem of conflict and instability in the developing countries, and unless the world addresses these underlying causes of conflict, they will continue to be major sources of friction that will threaten and undermine international peace and security.

Events in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Kosovo and now in East Timor cannot but exert more pressure on the time and resources of the international community in general and particularly on the Security Council. But this is the mission of that world body: to attend to just such areas of conflict. Admittedly, these are the most perilous times Africa has ever faced. The multiple dangers of armed conflict and general political instability and the ever-growing danger posed by the HIV/AIDS pandemic can only call for concerted joint world efforts to help reduce the dangers that face Africa and the world in general.

There are various ways the world can come to the aid of Africa, the most important of which are through aid and by creating conditions to make it possible for Africa to trade with the international community on terms acceptable to all. Africa is not asking for charity. No,

Africa is asking for genuine trade. Africa is not asking for arms. No, Africa is asking for fair and equitable recompense for its labour and resources. Africa is not asking for pity, but genuine partnership based on mutual interests.

The relationship between poverty and political instability can no longer be in any way doubted. It is not good enough for the developed world to demand good governance — an indefinable term — while creating conditions of poverty by bad governance in the economic area. Justice must prevail in our economic relations in order to lay the foundation for political and social justice.

A start should now be made by reviewing the inequitable conditions imposed by the World Trade Organization, which, if maintained, will only ensure continued marginalization of third world countries, condemning them to poverty and further instability.

I am quite aware that this forum may not be the appropriate one for addressing these issues, but it definitely has the right people to address the issues I have raised. Therefore, my fervent prayer and hope is that we enter the new millennium with a renewed sense of unity of purpose to eradicate manifest global injustices and create a more equitable world where want will not create chaos and instability.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Frederick Chiluba, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The President: As members can see, it has taken us almost three hours to hear five speakers, and we still have seven speakers remaining on the list for this meeting. In order to accommodate all the remaining speakers on the list, this meeting will most likely continue for at least another two hours.

In this connection, I would like to again remind members that the General Assembly, in paragraph 21 of the annex to resolution 51/241, indicated a voluntary guideline of up to 20 minutes for each statement in the general debate. I strongly appeal to speakers to make an extra effort to observe this 20-minute voluntary guideline for the general debate so that we can finish hearing all speakers at a reasonable hour.

I thank you for your kind cooperation.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

Mr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, The Honourable Denzil Douglas, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Douglas (Saint Kitts and Nevis): I wish most heartily to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to lead this body at this most significant time, as we stand at the threshold of the new millennium. I am persuaded that your antecedents, both in your own country and here at the United Nations, have eminently prepared you for the role that you have been elected to fill. I, for my part, pledge the total support and assistance of my delegation for the accomplishment of your great task.

I would also like to pay tribute to the work of your predecessor, the Foreign Minister of Uruguay, a representative of the Group of Latin America and Caribbean States, who steered the General Assembly through the difficult period of the fifty-third session.

Once again, I would like to express my unreserved esteem for the Secretary-General, whose charm, affability and intellect have been of great benefit to the United Nations system. It is clear to all that Mr. Kofi Annan is making a unique contribution to the development of this, our Organization. My country, Saint Kitts and Nevis, its Government, its people and myself heartily commend the Secretary-General.

May I take this opportunity to say a word of welcome and congratulations to the three new Member States admitted at the opening of this fifty-fourth session: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. As representative of a small island State from the Caribbean, I am happy to welcome them as small island States from the Pacific region. I recognize

that even though they have only now attained full membership in the United Nations they are well seized of their obligations and they will play their full part in upholding the principles of the Charter. Once again I congratulate them and wish them well for the future.

When this Organization was formed, some 54 years ago, it ushered in bright hopes and held out bright promise. It was an Organization dedicated to the ending of war and the enhancement of peace. Nations were to have beaten their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. I wish that, as we come to the end of the twentieth century and embark upon the twenty-first, we really could have celebrated this bright new world. But even now, during the closing months of the closing year of the millennium, mankind has been afflicted by violence and brutality, and man's inhumanity to man has been expressed in some of the most outrageous fashions.

The recent development in Kosovo, the terribly disturbing stories of the human tragedy that befell its people, the injustices that were highlighted during that conflict — all this constitutes a severe limitation in the work of the United Nations.

My Government takes the view that genocidal activity, from whichever sources it emanates, is unacceptable and a violation of international law. The United Nations must therefore be vigilant as it continues its pacification efforts. Now that the job of rebuilding is under way, let us look forward — look forward with hope to an era of peace and reconstruction — and let us hope that what may have seemed initially a failure may turn out to be part of the striking success of the United Nations.

As if there is to be no respite from the challenges affecting this body, while we thought we were overcoming the problems of Kosovo there flared up the problem of East Timor. Saint Kitts and Nevis, as a small State, has been appalled at the wanton violence and death visited upon the East Timorese people since the referendum. This world body must roundly condemn the inhumane activities perpetrated against the people of East Timor only because in seeking to fulfil their aspirations to live as a sovereign people, they gave legitimate expression them.

My Government would like to commend the work of the Secretary-General and all others who have sought to pull us back from this abyss of human disaster. Saint Kitts and Nevis urges the Indonesian authorities to discharge their obligations with maturity and to work together with the international community for the preservation of the peace and the protection of the people of East Timor. We welcome the acceptance by the Indonesian authorities of an international protective force and we pray that the people of East Timor will have their rights respected and be able to develop in freedom and democracy. We commend the recent commitment of the international community to the reconstruction and development of Kosovo and, now, to the people of East Timor.

We still hope, however, that there will be equal responsiveness to the people of the Great Lakes region and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa.

Since I have referred to the outrages in areas of the world which constitute a dark blot on the human condition, perhaps I ought to balance my remarks by recognizing that, in one area of the world, the Middle East, where peace for such a long time seemed illusive, a process of peace is now finally under way. I should place on record the appreciation of my country for all those who are assisting in the process of peace. We must continue to support the efforts of the peacemakers in order to ensure that the rhetoric of violence is silenced.

Saint Kitts and Nevis urges the United Nations and fellow world leaders to work towards preserving the integrity of the country and the people of Kuwait and to ensure that they enjoy the dignity of life without fear. The territorial integrity of their national must be respected and preserved and the Security Council solution concerning Iraqi aggression in Kuwait should be fully implemented.

By the same token, Saint Kitts and Nevis notes the peace process in Ireland and compliments all those who are contributing to the process. The world community should give its support to this initiative so that those who are seeking to retard the process of peaceful development will find no encouragement.

At this point, Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to express profound condolences to the Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan on the loss of lives which resulted from the recent devastating earthquake. We hope that the process of recovery will be speedy. I call on the international community, therefore, to come to the assistance of Taiwan, which in times past has assisted willingly in bringing relief to countries facing similar disasters.

Let me know say a word about the unsettled issue of the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. In

doing so, let me first make it clear that it never has been and is not now the intention of my country to interfere in the internal affairs or to give offence to any State Member of the United Nations. Saint Kitts and Nevis is persuaded that the Chinese people have the capacity and the accumulated wisdom to find a solution to whatever their differences appear to be, but our relationship with the authorities of the Republic of China, with whom we have conducted diplomatic relations since our independence in 1983, convinces me that the 22 million Chinese on Taiwan have a valuable contribution which they can make to international dialogue. The record of their development as a freedom-loving, peaceful, pluralistic democracy; the miraculous rebuilding of their economy; and their contribution to developing countries are all attributes which, in our view, require that they be recognized as being capable of making a contribution in international forums, including those of the United Nations.

In addition to the scourges of human conflict, there are other evils which still stare us in the face in these last few months of the closing year of the century. Poverty still confronts the vast majority of mankind. Children are still dying of malnutrition and some, in order to get food, have to allow themselves to be victimized and turned into cannon fodder. Some still do not get an education. Indeed, there are many children around the world who do not enjoy a childhood. I am happy that the United Nations has declared the decade beginning 2001 to be the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. The new millennium belongs to our children. It belongs to our children in Saint Kitts and Nevis and to the children of the world. We have a duty to help make, for them and with them, a better world than the one in which we now live.

Additionally, I have noted that the agenda for this fifty-fourth session includes an item entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal". Saint Kitts and Nevis wishes to place on record its country's support for that item, as we are doing everything in our power to build the development of our youth through sports.

By the same token, I am proud to report that our educational policies are yielding very positive results. We in Saint Kitts and Nevis have achieved a 98 per cent literacy rate and we have not only begun, but are intensifying the process of making all of our young people computer-literate and equipped to face the challenges of the new dawning century. Saint Kitts and Nevis welcomes the assistance of the international community to enable us to realize our objectives in this regard and to give this programme even greater forward thrust.

It is our view that the technological advancement of the past 54 years, instead of creating dislocations, should be used to improve understanding. It should be used to improve efficiency of production and to provide better revenue allocation and better living standards. Saint Kitts and Nevis urges those countries with the wherewithal to demonstrate appropriate leadership. I encourage them to use the availability of and their access to these technologies not only to generate greater economic wealth for themselves, but also to advance the economic and social well-being of the citizens of the world.

We applaud the progress being made with regard to women in development since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the Fourth World Conference on Women on 15 September 1995. Our country has demonstrated its unswerving commitment to gender equity by our participation in the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). For its part, Saint Kitts and Nevis is currently implementing a new gender management system and is introducing measures to ensure that the national budget in my country is more sensitive to gender issues. We are grateful to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation for technical assistance in this regard.

In a few days, the United Nations will convene a special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the small island developing States. We trust that the international community will give due recognition to the efforts being made by small island States to implement their commitments under the Programme of Action and note that those efforts have been affected by financial and other resource constraints and by global, economic and environmental factors. We look forward, therefore, to the international community's providing continued support for capacity- and institution-building programmes and projects in the small island developing States.

In the meantime, my Government welcomes the continued efforts of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) in promoting the interests and concerns of small island States. All small island developing States, like those of us in the Caribbean, are susceptible to the vagaries of nature as well as to man-made difficulties. Just last week our brothers and sisters in the Bahamas,

like those along the south-eastern coastal states of the United States of America, suffered terrible and destructive losses as a result of hurricane Floyd. I urge States Members of the United Nations to be generous in their support for any reconstruction endeavours for the thousands of displaced people.

Last year Saint Kitts and Nevis suffered a similar major blow, from hurricane Georges. The Assembly expressed its support for the efforts of my Government, and several other governments in the region, as we coped with that particular disaster. The Assembly also urged all States as a matter of urgency to contribute generously to the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. It further requested the Secretary-General, in collaboration with the international financial institutions and other bodies and agencies of the United Nations system, to assist the affected Governments in identifying their medium- and long-term needs and in mobilizing resources, as well as helping with the task of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the affected Caribbean countries.

I have dealt with this at some length because Saint Kitts and Nevis wishes to thank the Assembly for the support expressed in that decision. We hereby place on record that we have received assistance from the United Nations system and, in particular, from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and I assure the representatives in this world body that our efforts at rehabilitation have proceeded with what some have described as remarkable speed. But, however commendable emergency assistance is, it is not a formula for long-term, sustainable development. Countries such as ours need the continued support of the international community to ensure that our development is not sacrificed on the altar of globalization and trade liberalization.

How will the banana farmers in Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Dominica, or the sugar-cane workers in Saint Kitts and Nevis preserve the integrity of their families? How will they preserve the dignity of a good standard of living when the impersonal tentacles of globalization reach out to deprive them of the resources they need to survive? Human rights, in their purest and most practical sense, embody the human condition in all its basic elements. Therefore, the United Nations, as a major guarantor of these rights, should act as a counterbalance to globalization, which has begun to take food away from our people instead of helping them.

The World Trade Organization is expected to play a key role in promoting trade liberalization, thereby fuelling the globalization process. The World Trade Organization, however, is not a panacea for the ills of world trade. No new rules can alter the fact that in most areas of exports, developed countries will have a comparative advantage over developing countries. It is a basic principle in economics that a country with a comparative advantage in producing goods and services in given areas will always make money at the expense of countries that are less equipped. In short, the rules as now written will inevitably lead to a zero-sum situation where trade between developed countries and developing countries is concerned.

A regime, therefore, of unrestricted trade can lead to tremendous shocks in the economy of the less developed countries with very critical repercussions for their citizens. As part of the Caribbean Community, we have already witnessed how the logic of applying the same rules to all, regardless of the level of economic development, has led to serious dislocation within the banana-producing countries of our Caribbean subregion.

Saint Kitts and Nevis would prefer to see this body, through the United Nations Conference on Trade on Development (UNCTAD), take up the issue of what happens to countries caught in the toils of a free-trade regime. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes that this matter requires careful study by experts with a global perspective and it is our view that the United Nations is the one Organization capable of studying this issue objectively and putting recommendations before the leaders of the world to remedy what could potentially be a disaster for small, vulnerable economies.

By and large, a country such as Saint Kitts and Nevis, which depends upon a buoyant tourist sector, the export of sugar and the provision of financial services cannot — I repeat, cannot — object in principle to a world of open economies. But our position is that a world economic order predicated upon open economies works best with countries whose economies are roughly equal. If we are committed to eradicating poverty in every area of this world, then we must address the implications for poverty that are inherent in trading arrangements.

Those of us who live in the Caribbean, mostly in developing countries and small island States, are vulnerable and also affected by, *inter alia*, lack of capacity and human resource bases, the need for financial resources, social problems, high levels of poverty and the effects of globalization. We rely heavily on the coastal areas, as well as the marine environment in general, to

achieve sustainable development, and meet our needs and goals. For us, in the context of sustainable development, the Caribbean Sea must be seen as a special area. Saint Kitts and Nevis earnestly expects that Member States, the international community and the United Nations system will actively support our efforts in order to develop and implement this concept and take action so as to avert the threat of pollution from ship-generated waste, as well as accidental release of hazardous and noxious substances.

Despite the socio-economic quagmire that bedevils and undermines our efforts, my Government has remained steadfast. It has remained committed to create more opportunities for the people of Saint Kitts and Nevis. But we are aware that the Government cannot solve these problems alone. There is a critical role for the private sector as well. My Government is equally committed to working with local and international businesses, without, however, surrendering the fate of our nation to disinterested forces that could wreak further havoc on their lives.

My Government repeats its call for an expansion of the interpretation of human rights to incorporate fully economic rights and the right to development. In recognizing that there is an inseparable link between the human rights and economic rights of the individual, my Government has pledged to continue our programme to build affordable houses, create jobs, fight poverty and pursue new sources of local and foreign investment. My Government will be an avid partner and facilitator of business without compromising the quality of life for each of our citizens.

There is an important part for national Governments to play in the protection of their citizens' human rights, but there is a more substantial, comprehensive and far-reaching role for the United Nations as ultimate protector of the entire body of human rights.

This means that there should be a greater partnership between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations human rights mechanisms and other agencies and organs. In this way, new strategies can be devised for opening access to markets for those countries that continue to find themselves on the periphery of the international trading system. The Organization should help to create and investigate practical alternatives.

Hence, I maintain that we need a United Nations that is informed by the inequities of the world economic systems, and is able to respond to the social challenges that are being exacerbated as a result.

We do our best to achieve the eradication of poverty. Saint Kitts and Nevis seeks the support of the international community, thus building a bridge to a better world. Tomorrow's world should open with our people finding answers to the request to give them each day their daily bread, and the kingdom of peace should be realized here on Earth. There is an urgency to match our deeds with our words so that we may, all of us, find the forgiveness which is necessary as the basis for building peace in this world.

Last year I spoke of the viability of social-venture philanthropy through which Governments and businesses may collaborate with each other. This concept already exists at a similar level within many corporate structures. Companies are already engaged in projects that enhance and maintain a positive corporate image. We would take this further if companies would recognize the importance of preserving a good corporate culture by improving the standard of living of the national constituencies in which they do profitable business. A reformed United Nations, with its existing organs, funds and programmes, can help to implement such strategies.

We must move with informed haste, because I fear that if we fail to translate the benefits of democracy, technological growth and economic wealth into tangible gains for our people, future chaos will not be far behind. I am one of those who refuse to accept that the developed world could be ignorant of the challenges facing the small and poor economies. I am reluctant to think that national interests could be so blinding that Governments neglect to realize that the problems plaguing any one region, for instance, have serious ramifications much further afield.

We have to recommit to the elimination of the potent cancer of illicit drugs and global consequences. We are all victims. Therefore, we must all become partners. Let us commit to root out the menace of narco-trafficking that is becoming embedded in our various societies.

I dare say that the multitude of problems before us is complex and very involved. The old paradigms that prevailed in the cold war have outlived their usefulness. It is not only those elements that directly threaten our political and strategic interests, but also those factors that undermine a country's ability to preserve its economic, social and cultural fabric that should guide national

interests. There is no longer one giant enemy, but there are a number of persistent factors that could conspire at any one time to destroy the delicate balance of our societies.

In spite of all the shortcomings of this body, if the United Nations did not exist, it would be necessary to invent it, because there is no other organization that has contributed as much to the development of humankind.

Moreover, the Government of Saint Kitts and Nevis is happy to be given this opportunity to express its views on a number of issues of concern to my country.

Without the United Nations, a micro State such as Saint Kitts and Nevis would never have been heard. Therefore, as we cross over into the new millennium, Saint Kitts and Nevis joins with the rest of the world as we commit ourselves to the continued development of the United Nations in order to ensure that all people everywhere will enjoy the fulfilment of the promise of peace, prosperity and progress.

The Acting President *(spoke in Arabic):* On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis for the statement he has just made.

The Honourable Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President *(spoke in Arabic):* The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Sartaj Aziz, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aziz (Pakistan): Mr.President, it is an honour to address the General Assembly at this session, the last to be held in the twentieth century.

May I begin by welcoming the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the family of the United Nations. We look forward to working closely with the new Members.

The twentieth century has been described as the age of extremes. In this century, human civilization made quantum strides in progress and prosperity. We discovered the ocean depths, travelled into the outer space and landed on the moon. We have witnessed the technological and information revolutions transforming the wide world into a global village.

The twentieth century has also been a violent and tragic century. Millions died in the two world wars and hundreds of other conflicts. Millions perished as a result of poverty and disease.

This session of the Assembly offers an opportunity to identify the major global challenges which humankind is likely to confront in the next century. The United Nations should therefore devote the next year to evolving ways and means to address these challenges and to promoting an agreed approach next year at the Millennium Assembly.

Peace remains the foremost challenge of our times. The end of the cold war and the triumph of the principles of democracy and free markets created hope for the dawn of universal peace. This, unfortunately, turned out to be elusive. Instead, conflicts have continued to ravage the world.

Long-suppressed national aspirations, as well as frustration with continuing inequity and deprivation, have led to widespread violence and wars, between and within States. The several conflicts afflicting Africa, the Balkans and the Caucasus, as well as Palestine, Kashmir and Afghanistan, are painful reminders of the ascendance of war and the absence of peace.

The United Nations, under the wise leadership of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, has endeavoured to cope with these conflicts and crises. Unilateral approaches, accompanying the centralization of global influence, have not always ensured just and durable solutions to complex problems rooted in history, religion, politics and economics in various parts of the world.

In the final and decisive confrontation of the cold war, 1.5 million Afghans were killed, a million were maimed, and a whole country was destroyed. Ten years after the foreign intervention ended, almost 3 million Afghan refugees are still in Pakistan and Iran. With no reconstruction and no development in that poor country, the new generation knows nothing but war. Rehabilitation and reconstruction are the right of the valiant Afghan people. Economic development, accompanied by education and modernization, is the best way to end violence, promote human rights and improve social conditions in Afghanistan.

Peace in Afghanistan is vital for Pakistan. Turmoil in Afghanistan creates turbulence on our frontier. The preservation of Afghanistan's territorial integrity is

pivotal for peace and stability throughout Central Asia. Peace in Afghanistan will open vast opportunities for commerce and economic interaction between Central Asia and South Asia and beyond.

Pakistan has persisted in promoting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. We support the efforts of the United Nations as well as the "six plus two" process. Pakistan is constantly endeavouring to bring about an end to the fighting and promote reconciliation and political accommodation between the Taliban Government and the Northern Alliance.

The world has welcomed the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East. We earnestly hope that it will proceed smoothly to culminate in the establishment of a just and durable peace based on the fundamental rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to their own State, and the withdrawal of Israel from the Syrian Golan Heights and southern Lebanon.

We are glad that the tension between morality and legality has been overcome in Kosovo. We are happy the Kosovar refugees have returned home. Yet Kosovo's travails are not over. Pakistan will continue to support the efforts of the United Nations for peace in the Balkans.

In East Timor, we trust that the human tragedy has ended, even as the United Nations peacekeepers arrive there. I wish to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan and my compatriot, Ambassador Jamsheed Marker, who were greatly challenged in the process of fostering freedom in East Timor while safeguarding stability.

We have learned valuable lessons from Kosovo and East Timor: a people's aspiration for freedom cannot be suppressed indefinitely; a free exercise of the right of self-determination is indispensable for peace; self-determination can be best exercised in an environment free of fear and coercion; and the United Nations is best placed to oversee the exercise of self-determination.

These conclusions were already accepted for Kashmir 50 years ago. The Security Council decided that the final disposition of the disputed State of Kashmir should be determined by its people, in a free and impartial plebiscite held under United Nations auspices. India resiled from its acceptance of this agreement and from its own pledge to allow the Kashmiri people to decide their own future. On one pretext or another, it refused to implement the provisions of Security Council resolutions.

India's repression in Jammu and Kashmir has killed thousands of Kashmiris, forced hundreds of thousands into exile, led to three wars between Pakistan and India and consigned the two countries to a relationship of endemic conflict and mistrust. Pakistan and India can and must overcome this unfortunate legacy.

To this end, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, soon after assuming office two and a half years ago, proposed the initiation of a comprehensive, structured and sustained dialogue between Pakistan and India to address Kashmir, peace and security and other outstanding issues. India agreed, after one year, to a dialogue on Kashmir. To provide political momentum to the bilateral dialogue, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif invited Prime Minister Vajpayee to visit Pakistan.

At the Lahore summit, India and Pakistan committed themselves to intensify their efforts to resolve Kashmir, build mutual confidence and peace and pave the way for broader cooperation. In Lahore, the Pakistan Prime Minister urged his Indian counterpart to ease the repression in Kashmir. He cautioned that without progress on Kashmir political dynamics could compromise the good intentions reflected in the Lahore Declaration. But India displayed no desire to genuinely address, let alone resolve, the Kashmir issue. Its cruel repression of the Kashmiri people continued unabated.

The Kargil crisis was a manifestation of the deeper malaise spawned by the unresolved Kashmir problem and India's escalating repression of the Kashmiri people. India launched a massive military operation in Kargil and threatened a wider conflict by mobilizing its armed forces all along the Pakistan-India international border. Pakistan acted with restraint. We believed that war between two nuclear-armed neighbours must be avoided. We offered immediate de-escalation and negotiations to address problems along the Line of Control, including India's violation of this Line and occupation of Chorbatla, Siachen and Qamar. Pakistan's efforts led to the disengagement by the Kashmiri freedom fighters from the Kargil heights and offered a renewed opportunity for negotiation and dialogue.

Pakistan is ready for the resumption of the Lahore process with India. However, instead of reciprocating Pakistan's willingness to pursue negotiations, India has posed preconditions for resuming the talks. The Indian military deliberately shot down an unarmed Pakistan naval aircraft on a routine flight within our airspace, killing 16 of our naval personnel — mostly young

trainees — in cold blood and without any warning. India is also continuing hostilities along the Line of Control and has repeatedly launched attacks across the Line in several sectors.

Kashmir is not a dispute over land. It is about the destiny of a people; it is about implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council; it is about respect for the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people, especially their right to self-determination. The complete boycott by the Kashmiris of the sham elections in Kashmir organized by India earlier this month is clear testimony of their total alienation from India. No settlement can be durable if it is contrary to their wishes.

The Kashmir issue cannot be frozen while its people are determined to secure their freedom; while the blood of Kashmiri martyrs is being shed by the bullets and bayonets of the 700,000-strong Indian occupation force. Human rights must be upheld not only in Kosovo and Timor, but also in Kashmir. To make progress towards a settlement, the world must demand that India take immediate steps to halt its repression of the Kashmiri people.

For this purpose, India must: first, stop the cruel crackdowns against Kashmiri villages and urban areas; second, release the thousands of Kashmiris held in detention centres and jails; third, remove military pickets and troops stationed in Kashmiri towns and villages; fourth, allow the presence of international human rights organizations in Kashmir; fifth, agree to the stationing of impartial human rights monitors in Jammu and Kashmir; sixth, entrust the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with a larger role in Kashmir, including the provision of relief and help to the thousands of Kashmiri widows and orphans; and, seventh, agree to a progressive reduction of the 700,000 Indian troops deployed in Kashmir.

The international community is increasingly conscious of the imperative for a just resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. The risk of a wider conflict cannot be contemplated in a nuclear environment. Kashmir remains on the Security Council's agenda. The Council's resolutions remain to be implemented. The promise of self-determination made by the United Nations to the Kashmiri people remains to be fulfilled. Therefore, while we will, hopefully, soon resume bilateral talks with India, Pakistan would welcome the association of the genuine representatives of the Kashmiri people with the negotiating process to promote a solution consistent with the United Nations Security Council resolutions.

India's ambitions threaten to further propel our region towards a dangerous nuclear and conventional arms race. For decades — even after India's first nuclear explosion in 1974 — Pakistan sought to exclude nuclear weapons from South Asia. Ironically, the advocates of non-proliferation imposed discriminatory restrictions against Pakistan while ignoring India's steady development of nuclear and missile capabilities. Last May India put the final nail in the coffin of South Asian non-proliferation when it conducted five nuclear tests and declared itself a nuclear-weapon State. Its leaders then proceeded to threaten Pakistan. Confronted by an aggressive nuclear India, Pakistan was obliged to demonstrate its nuclear capability and thus restore nuclear deterrence and strategic balance in South Asia. The response of the major Powers, to penalize not only the offender but also the victim, was patently unfair.

Even after our tests, Pakistan proposed nuclear restraint to India, consistent with our conviction that nuclear deterrence can and should be maintained between Pakistan and India at the lowest possible level. In our separate dialogues with the United States and India, we proposed a strategic restraint regime outlining specific measures for nuclear restraint and stabilization, conventional arms balance and the resolution of outstanding disputes. Hopes for restraint have been shattered by the announcement of India's nuclear doctrine, setting out plans to acquire and operationally deploy a huge arsenal of land-, air- and sea-based nuclear weapons and to further build up its conventional forces, almost all of which are deployed against Pakistan. Even the Indian offer of non-first use of nuclear weapons is designed to gain it acceptance as a nuclear-weapon State and to justify the acquisition of a massive nuclear arsenal as a second-strike capability.

India's pursuit of this doctrine will destabilize South Asia. Pakistan will be compelled to enhance its nuclear and missile capabilities and operational readiness to preserve deterrence. India must test again to develop warheads for its missiles. This would subvert the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). India's quest for its large nuclear arsenal could jeopardize prospects for the conclusion of a fissile material cut-off treaty. India's ambitions threaten peace and stability not only in South Asia, but also in adjacent regions, including the Gulf and the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean.

The international community must act — and it must act immediately — if it is to avoid a hair-trigger security environment in South Asia, with grave implications for

global peace, security and disarmament. To this end, the Assembly should endorse the concept of strategic restraint in South Asia.

For this purpose, it should urge India to do the following.

First, India should disavow the proposed nuclear doctrine. Secondly, it should refrain from any further nuclear tests and adhere to the CTBT. For its part, Pakistan remains committed to adhering to the CTBT in an atmosphere free of coercion. Thirdly, it should undertake not to operationally deploy nuclear weapons on land, air or sea. Fourthly, it should open negotiations with Pakistan for an agreement to achieve balance in fissile material stocks, while both India and Pakistan participate in the fissile material treaty negotiations, expected to commence early next year in Geneva. Fifthly, India should eschew the acquisition of anti-ballistic missile systems and any military-related capabilities in space; and sixthly, cut back drastically on its plans to purchase and develop various advanced and destabilizing conventional weapons systems. In this context, Pakistan appeals to those countries which intend to supply these conventional weapons to India to reconsider their policies.

Pakistan believes that it is now essential to convene a conference, with the participation of all the permanent members of the Security Council and other interested Powers, as well as Pakistan and India, to promote the goals of strategic restraint and stability in South Asia.

The threat of nuclear war does not emanate only from South Asia. Although the strategic confrontation of the cold war is over, the major nuclear Powers, even while pressing for non-proliferation by others, have asserted their own right to possess nuclear weapons indefinitely. The implementation of strategic arms reduction agreements is stalled. If the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is rescinded or revised, and missile defence plans are implemented, the nuclear-arms race may well be revived among the nuclear-weapon States. And heightened tensions among them, over new or old disputes, could once again move the nuclear doomsday clock closer to midnight.

Pakistan supports the endeavours to achieve nuclear disarmament and the early elimination of all nuclear weapons. Multilateral negotiations can evolve agreed plans to realize these vital objectives. We also support the call for preserving the ABM Treaty and avoiding the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missile systems. Negotiations to prevent the further militarization of outer space should be initiated forthwith in the Geneva Conference on Disarmament.

In a globalized yet divided world, with modern weaponry and communications available to almost everyone, terrorism has emerged as a pervasive challenge in many parts of the world. It is a complex phenomenon with many manifestations, a lethal tool used by ruthless individuals, groups and States.

Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, wherever it occurs. For a decade, during the Afghan war, Pakistan was the single largest target of terrorism from across our borders. Even today, our adversaries foment fear in Pakistani cities by sponsoring and financing terrorist bomb blasts and random violence. Our eastern neighbour has mastered the black art of state terrorism in Kashmir, utilizing the tactics of crack-downs, custodial killings, disappearances, arson, torture and rape, as tools of repression against the Kashmiri people's struggle for freedom and self-determination. It is with good reason that the non-aligned countries have denounced the repression of peoples under foreign occupation as the worst form of terrorism.

Pakistan condemns the reprehensible tendency in certain quarters to link manifestations of terrorism with Islam. We welcome the resolution adopted earlier this year by the Commission on Human Rights which denounced attempts, including in the media, to defame Islam and link it with terrorism.

Free markets and free political systems, accompanied by breath-taking technological advances, are rapidly integrating our world across frontiers and continents. Unfortunately, most developing countries have been bypassed by the benefits of globalization. Income inequality has increased among and within countries. And, as the Asian financial crisis showed, growth has often been fragile.

Market forces alone will not yield an equitable economic outcome for all peoples. At the tenth United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD X) and other international conferences, we need to rethink current development strategies and formulate new approaches for broad-based development, guided by the need for economic equity for individuals and nations.

Action is required in three main areas. First, in the area of trade, we need a truly level playing field to

encourage greater balance in the benefits of a rules-based multilateral trading system for the developing countries. The World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle can advance this goal by resolving problems involved in the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements on textiles and agriculture and addressing priority issues for developing countries in future negotiations — not by insisting on premature liberalization in sectors where they are unable to compete. In Seattle, we must also oppose the forces of protectionism disguised as movements to promote environmental and social standards.

Secondly, in the financial area, we need a more stable financial order which can control the volatility of capital flows, make available adequate liquidity, especially for the developing countries, alleviate their debt burden, and ensure coherence between global financial and trade policies. The high level "event" on financing for development could help to build agreement on these issues.

Thirdly, technology: in an increasingly knowledge-based global economy, the technology and knowledge gap between the developed and developing countries must be rapidly narrowed. To this end, it would be useful to evolve global principles and guidelines for access to and transfer of technology.

In our globalizing yet fractured world, marked by stark contrasts between prosperity and poverty, between tranquillity and turbulence, the hopes of hundreds of millions of people lie in the United Nations, the most universal global institution. The United Nations must play its role, as prescribed in the Charter, as the centre for the harmonization of the policies of Member States and as the central instrument for collective security. The Security Council's procedures must be made more transparent and democratic, to reflect the collective will and views of all States Members of the United Nations.

The Assembly must also agree on the objectives and principles and the approaches and instruments which will enable the international community to respond to the emerging challenges posed by conflicts, arms proliferation and unequal globalization. It is here, at the United Nations, that we must seek consistent respect for the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter, and respect for its binding decisions. Only thus can we realize the vision of peace and prosperity for all peoples in a global environment of freedom and democracy.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr. George Papandreou.

Mr. Papandreou (Greece): I should like to express my most sincere congratulations to Mr. Gurirab on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at this session. It is significant that his country, which gained independence as a result of the struggle of its people and the successful efforts of this Organization, will be presiding today over this Assembly and will, I am certain, bring its work to a successful conclusion. I extend my congratulations to his predecessor for the commitment with which he conducted his duties. I express our warmest support to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless efforts. He has used his competent political skill, his moral authority and his deep knowledge of the opportunities and limitations of his office to pursue daunting tasks, often working against all odds.

My Government fully subscribes to the statement delivered by Ms. Halonen, the Foreign Minister of Finland, on behalf of the European Union, and to the memorandum circulated by the Union.

Globalization in the field of information, ideas, the economy, democracy and human rights has been the dominant feature of the last years of our century. Some people fear it; some try to ignore it; a few try to fight it; others try to avoid it. Many welcome it as a creative challenge. We Greeks are among the last category: we thrive on openness, freedom of exchange, freedom of thought, expression and inquiry. We speak the language of dialogue, the language of ideas. That is our tradition.

We are proud of that tradition which sparked off the Renaissance and supported the Enlightenment, whose essence was captured by Immanuel Kant's motto *sapere aude*: dare to think. Globalization challenges us to dare to think the unthinkable in terms of sovereignty, international relations and human rights. But that is not enough: we know we must go beyond it; we must dare to state a vision for our world; we must dare to hope.

We take heart that at the end of our century democracy is being celebrated as the universal system of political rule, the only secure basis for legitimacy in the modern world. Experience teaches us that democracy not only institutionalizes freedom but also brings prosperity. Celebrated economist Amartya Sen has conclusively proved that a democratic system of Government is no

obstacle to the creation of wealth: development does not require an authoritarian ruler. Sen has observed that no substantial famine has ever occurred in any country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press.

We take heart from the fact that more States claim to be democratic now than ever before in human history, and we are firmly committed to seeing this trend expand. Slowly but surely, we are observing the globalization of democracy, and we dare to hope.

Nevertheless, our challenges and political dilemmas are formidable. We need to globalize peace. We watch in awe as Israelis and Palestinians shake hands once again. The peace might be local, but our pride is international. Equally, when watching India and Pakistan, we dare to hope for non-proliferation. We cringe as pictures of war come out of Africa. We cannot hope for peace yet shut our eyes to war.

We need to globalize human rights. Do we apply the same standards everywhere, from Kosovo and East Timor to Cyprus and Rwanda? We need to globalize our concept of rights pertaining to human beings. We understand multinationals that support human rights to protect their investments, but who will protect individuals who seek protection from the indignities of the world market?

We need to globalize ethics. From Kosovo to East Timor we have bowed our heads, for we are still ill-equipped to deal with global ethical dilemmas such as those mentioned by the Secretary-General. Can human suffering be subordinated to sovereignty? Can we afford to be inconsistent in the application of military intervention? Is it right to impose trade sanctions on Governments that violate international rules, at the expense of their innocent populations?

We seek to globalize values. Technological innovation is calling into question some of our most deeply felt beliefs. From cloning to brain transplants, scientists now face dilemmas that have global implications. We must make sure that fear does not inhibit scientific development, but also that curiosity does not inhibit civility.

We need to globalize wealth. The growing gap between rich and poor countries has marginalized a large segment of the world's population and led to dangerous social problems, from illegal immigration to drug trafficking, terrorism, child labour and sexual exploitation. In an effort to contribute what little we can, Greece decided to increase its official development assistance by an annual average of 27 per cent over a five-year plan, targeting in particular sub-Saharan Africa.

How can we hope to face these challenges if the people of this world do not share a basic education and do not enjoy basic health? While the electronic media have minimized the restrictions of borders in the transfer of resources, wealth and information, democratic institutions and social policies remain confined within the borders of nations. We cannot wait for democracy to spread at this pace: we need a faster cure. We need to confront this global democratic deficit by supporting global democratic institutions.

Beyond the globalization of democracy, I call for the democratization of globalism. This is a vision worthy of the United Nations. We seek a United Nations that is an active centre for peace and justice, a centre for the improvement of the life of each individual on this Earth. We expect a United Nations to respond to our needs for global ethics and global values. We believe in a strong United Nations that will act swiftly and effectively against those who wage war, harbour terrorism and destroy our planet. We aspire to a United Nations which will become the centre for democratic thinking and democratic practice throughout our world.

May these United Nations, on our behalf, develop a culture of dialogue and a dialogue of cultures. For this is the essence of democratic politics: not a clash of different civilizations, but an educative dialogue that allows all to take part. We must educate each other to find peaceful and democratic ways to confront our challenges.

This is a task for the United Nations. We yield to its authority as the only forum able to democratize the globalization process. We call for all Member States to provide the United Nations with the authority and the means to perform its duties. Greece will do so. As our Ghanaian colleague said yesterday, we continue to ask more of the United Nations, and yet we continue to endow it with fewer resources. We feel that following the important reforms of the Secretariat, the time has come to expand this Organization's authority, responsibility and budget. Do we dare allow this Organization to hope? In Greece we do.

My country believes in strengthening the United Nations, but it also believes in doing its own work, on the ground, in the region. Uri Savir, the Israeli negotiator in Oslo, has said that peacemaking is a gradual revolution

that moves from hostility to a desired conciliation, a collection of moments in which a new trend is set in motion.

Together with the International Olympic Committee, Greece has proposed the creation of such a moment — a global moment: we would like to see the revival of the ancient Greek tradition of the Olympic truce. We hope that this Assembly, which has unanimously endorsed that project, will give its full support to the observance of the Olympic truce during the games of the year 2000 in Sydney, Australia, in Athens in 2004 and at all future Olympics, so that the event may become a momentous festival of excellence, cross-cultural dialogue and peace in our global village.

From Cyprus to Bosnia, a "collection of moments" is providing a ray of hope that, one day, a united Balkans and South-Eastern Europe will belong to a united Europe: a family of nations, a bouquet of cultures, a kaleidoscope of ethnicities, where diversity is our strength and where borders are so profoundly respected that they cease to exist. Can we dare see that far? Do we dare not to? We dare to hope.

Turning first to Cyprus: following the declaration on Cyprus by the leaders of the Group of Eight and Security Council resolutions 1250 (1999) and 1251 (1999) of last June, there is hope that a new initiative may break the deadlock. Just as we envision a multicultural Balkans, we are striving to see Cyprus as a federal State with a single sovereignty and a single citizenship, a united, demilitarized, independent country with its territorial integrity safe from encroachments and with no foreign troops on its soil. The accession of Cyprus to the European Union would certainly benefit both communities living on the island. We invite the Turkish Cypriots, in the spirit of a newfound friendship between Greeks and Turks, to grab this historical opportunity. Let us break down the last "Berlin wall", which artificially divides those two peoples. Let us show the world and our children that, yes, we can live together in peace and harmony with respect for human rights and democratic principles, within a wider European family.

The tragic events in Kosovo will be remembered for acts of brutal ethnic cleansing and a military intervention that ensued without the authorization of the Security Council. Today, I encounter individuals who, under pressure to "close the case of the Balkans", opt to redraw the maps, believing that ethnic isolation, constructing new walls and barriers between our peoples of the region, will solve our problems. But it can only compound our problems.

I assure the Assembly that there is no short path, no lazy road if you will, to lasting peace in the Balkans. Consistent with our policy in our region is our belief that borders are sacrosanct. But within them we must do our utmost to protect minorities, democratic procedures and human rights. We must strive to develop the three pillars of the Stability Pact for South-eastern Europe: democracy, security and reconstruction. We need to build democratic institutions, judicial and financial systems, competitive business and free media, things we often take for granted. We need to be aggressive in ensuring that all forms of likely threat to security within and among our countries are dealt with directly, openly and with vigour. The protection of minorities is of fundamental importance. We need, as the Secretary-General has said, a new commitment to the prevention of conflict. We need to provide basic economic help that will fight against the poverty and degradation that lead to ethnic and religious fanaticism.

But more important, we need a total Balkan approach. When I say "total", I mean a coherent and consistent approach by the international community. The Balkans are badly served by mixed signals.

Greece has drawn for itself a creative and effective role in the region. Greece supports all efforts to deepen democracy in the region. A total Balkan approach to democracy, security and reconstruction will pave the way for our neighbours to enter the European Union. Yugoslavia, of course, is also an integral part of this total Balkan approach. So too are Greece's bilateral and trilateral contacts of very close cooperation with Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania. We worked closely together during the recent Kosovo crisis for stability in the region and in providing humanitarian aid to Kosovo refugees.

We believe that in our region there are no good or bad people, just good and bad practices. We have delivered and continue to deliver humanitarian assistance, as major humanitarian problems remain in many parts of Yugoslavia, and peacekeeping forces. We have conducted multilateral diplomacy, and we have promoted every effort that adheres to principles I have just stated without discrimination. Yes, in the total Balkan approach there is room for both the Albanian and the Serbian people. We ask them to dare to have a vision, the same vision: that,

one by one, each Balkan country will become part of a united democratic Europe.

If the road to peace is indeed made up of a collection of moments, then I also dare hope for our relations with Turkey. My Turkish counterpart, Ismail Cem, and I have been engaged in careful diplomacy for many months. We recently inaugurated discussion committees to address a number of bilateral concerns, including trade, tourism, the environment and security, where we feel our two countries have much to gain from mutual cooperation.

Peoples' aspirations for the principles of democracy, security and prosperity can overcome historical strife. In this democratic spirit, we believe that our security is bound by the stability in the region; that our neighbours' strength is our own strength. From the outset, therefore, Greece shared with Turkey the vision that one day Turkey would become a worthy member of a united Europe. But we recognize today that our role needs to be to lead the process.

The terrible earthquakes that shook both our countries have accelerated that process. Spontaneous and dramatic acts of fraternity and solidarity between our citizens short-circuited elaborate diplomatic strategies and exerted powerful pressure on our Governments to move ahead boldly. I for one shall never forget the sweat, the tears and the genuine expressions of solidarity and friendship shared by so many non-governmental organizations, and particularly by Greek and Turkish rescue workers from the Disaster Management Special Unit (EMAK) and the Turkish Search and Rescue Team (AKUT), sifting through the rubble of buildings destroyed by the earthquakes, looking for survivors. These people did not wait for us to act. Their actions globalize democracy, human solidarity and peace.

That is one more lesson for democracy. International relations, humanitarianism, peace and cooperation have much to gain if we allow for citizens' diplomacy and give our full support to constructive roles for non-governmental organizations.

Building on this unique experience, in our first joint act as members of this Organization, I join hands today with my Turkish counterpart, Ismail Cem. I join hands with him to announce to the Assembly the establishment of a joint stand-by disaster response unit composed of contingents drawn from governmental and non-governmental agencies of both countries, Greece and Turkey, to reinforce the United Nations capacity in this field.

Let me take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt condolences to the victims of the recent disastrous earthquake in Taiwan, and to their families.

A comprehensive and methodical approach to dealing with natural disasters is in line with the recent statement by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, that some major risk reduction and disaster prevention programmes require levels of funding that many poor countries simply cannot afford.

In this Assembly, great visions founded on a strong sense of realism have helped to make the world more democratic, safer, and a little less painful for those in need. In Greece and south-east Europe, similar visions are helping to build democratic institutions, cement peace and pave the way to prosperity. There simply is no truth in the saying that we in the Balkans are trapped, that we have produced more history than we can consume and that we are prisoners of past conflicts and hatreds. History is not duress unless one makes it so. The challenge to every new generation of Greeks, and the challenge to our neighbours, is to learn from our history, and not to become slaves to it. We are building a new collective vision for the region, slowly but surely. We look forward to the day when Belgrade and Pristina will be an easy bus ride away, when Jerusalem and Damascus, Athens and Ankara and, of course, the two parts of divided Nicosia, will no longer be separated by fear and suspicion, but will be joined in peace. Perhaps that day is still far away but, as a Chinese proverb has it, a journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step.

History is not compulsion unless one makes it so. The challenge to every new generation of Greeks, the challenge to our neighbours, is to learn from our history rather than become slaves to it. We are building a new collective vision for the region, slowly but surely.

We look forward to the day when Belgrade and Pristina will be an easy bus ride away from each other, when Jerusalem and Damascus, Athens and Ankara and, of course, the two parts of divided Nicosia, will no longer be separated by fear and suspicion, but be joined in peace. Perhaps that day is still far away, but as a Chinese proverb has it, a journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step.

This step we dared take this year. We dared to imagine the world at the end of a thousand miles. Rigas Fereos, a prominent Greek revolutionary, wrote in a constitution for the Balkans more than two centuries ago,

> "All should be equal with equal rights without prejudice in the Balkans: Christian, Muslim and Jew, Albanian, Slav, Romanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Turk, Armenian, from Bosnia to Arabia."

Today, 100 days before the next millennium, we commit ourselves to keep walking in this direction of a new hope and vision for our world. As they say in Latin America, *se hace camino al andar*.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The next speaker is the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark, His Excellency Mr. Niels Helveg Petersen, on whom I now call.

Mr. Petersen (Denmark): Let me first associate myself with the statement of my colleague, the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the European Union.

Let me also, Mr. President, congratulate you on your election. Denmark's relations with Namibia and with you personally go back to long before your country's independence. I am therefore particularly gratified to see you in this position.

In my statement today, I should like to dwell upon the responsibility of the international community, including, of course, the United Nations, for human security and development. We live in an ever more globalized world. Almost every day we are confronted with new challenges that must be met. Distance or ignorance of events no longer provides a sense of security.

Close international cooperation is needed to meet the challenges. But paradoxically, although the challenges are global, policy-making and institutions still remain predominantly national in focus and scope.

Increasingly we see internal conflicts and blatant violations of human rights and humanitarian law pose a special and serious kind of threat. Terrorism, drug-trafficking and international crime also thrive in a globalized world.

The international community must possess the means and display the resolve to confront such challenges. Our fundamental concerns about human security and human development cannot be met only in a domestic context.

I should like to illustrate these concerns, first, in relation to the Kosovo and East Timor crises and, secondly, with regard to international development cooperation.

Kosovo and East Timor raised serious questions with regard to the classic concepts of State sovereignty, the respect for human rights and the non-use of force in international relations. How do these concepts interrelate? How do they relate to our concern for human security? And what does the interrelationship mean for the role and responsibility of the United Nations and for the Security Council?

The first point to be made is that the international community cannot be idle in the face of gross and systematic violations of human rights. Nor can we stand idly by if the United Nations and its representatives, who have assisted a people in exercising its right to self-determination, are trampled on.

International law finds itself at a crossroads. We have spent the last 50 years developing an impressive body of human rights law, applicable in time of peace as well as during armed conflict, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Indeed, there is no shortage of rules. What is lacking is effective implementation of existing rules, in the very last resort through the use of force.

We must now aim at enforcement in order to provide assistance, regardless of frontiers, to the victims of human rights violations. We must show resolve in promoting respect for the rule of law and for the institutions called upon to uphold the rule of law. A broad spectrum of actions is available; the choice of action must depend on the problem we face. The thorny question is whether and when to use military force in the face of an emerging humanitarian catastrophe, such as a planned ethnic cleansing or downright genocide.

It cannot be emphasized too often that a negotiated settlement must remain the primary and ultimate goal of any conflict solution. If, however, all attempts at securing a peaceful solution fail or are brushed aside, the question of whether to use force in one form or another arises. This brings the United Nations Security Council to the forefront. The Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It has

carried out its functions as foreseen in the United Nations Charter in a much more effective and innovative way since the end of the cold war. I am referring, in particular, to the conflicts in relation to Iraq, Bosnia, Haiti, and Albania. A main challenge for the Security Council remains that of reacting effectively against gross and systematic violations of human rights conducted against an entire population.

The Council has interpreted its competence under Chapter VII of the Charter to cover humanitarian situations that shock the conscience of mankind. This augurs well for the victims of brutal oppression and ill for the dictators of today. Oppressors of whole peoples, mass murderers and ethnic cleansers can no longer invoke the shield of national sovereignty. Nor can they expect impunity. The international community has a responsibility to act in the face of a humanitarian tragedy such as the one we witnessed in Kosovo and the one we are witnessing in East Timor.

Unfortunately, the Council was not able to live up to its responsibilities concerning the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. Should the paralysis of the Council lead to blind acceptance? No; the international community could not stand idly by and watch, while the principle of State sovereignty was misused in Kosovo to violate international humanitarian law.

In this serious situation the decision to launch the North Atlantic Treaty Organization campaign was legitimate and justified. It opened the way to a political solution, bringing the United Nations back into a central role.

In East Timor we were faced with widespread, organized atrocities against a civilian population exercising its right to self-determination. In addition, the risk of total disregard for the United Nations was looming. Fortunately, the Security Council was not paralysed. Pressure from the international community brought about action. An agreement was reached to deploy a multinational force.

We welcome this development.

We urge the Indonesian Government to cooperate fully with the multinational force. In the meantime, the Indonesian Government remains responsible for the security of the population. It must make it possible for the humanitarian organizations to provide assistance for the large number of displaced persons in East Timor.

We all share the responsibility for enabling the international community to address these issues and for enabling the United Nations to act. Where force has to be resorted to, we have to look to countries possessing that capability. In practical terms, this means that we often have to rely upon countries and organizations in the region.

The Security Council must do its utmost to live up to its primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace, security and humanitarian decency — a primary responsibility that all the Member States have vested in the Security Council in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter.

The Council's permanent members should apply the veto only in matters of vital importance, taking into account their unique responsibility for the interests of the United Nations as a whole. And they should state on what grounds they consider such a situation to be present.

The Secretary-General has said,

> "any armed intervention is itself a result of the failure of prevention". *(A/54/PV.4)*

I agree with the Secretary-General that conflict prevention and resolution must be given the highest possible priority in international relations. It should be carried out on the basis of a common resolve to secure human rights for all. The United Nations constitutes a needed and valuable tool to this end.

Conflict resolution must, of course, not become only a question of the use of force. Let me point to two important aspects of the post-conflict situation. First, those who are responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity must be brought to justice. The creation of the ad hoc tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda were important first steps towards establishing an effective international legal order based upon democratic values and the rule of law. The work of the tribunals has underlined the need for a permanent international criminal court designed to bring to justice those who have committed crimes of the most heinous kind. The prospects for lasting peace and reconciliation are severely undermined if war criminals and the like remain at large.

The historic adoption last year in Rome of a statute for a permanent international criminal court is a landmark contribution to restoring the rule of law and ending

impunity. Although not perfect, the Rome Statute provides a satisfactory basis for an effective and credible court. We urge all States to ratify the Statute as early as possible in order to put this historic building block in place. Denmark intends to ratify in the spring of the year 2000.

Secondly, post-conflict assistance must be provided to the societies split by civil strife or war. Denmark is ready to do its part. With respect to the western Balkans, we initially provided assistance to refugees and for their safe return. Now we are gradually turning to assistance in reconstruction and rebuilding of both physical and social infrastructure. A plan of action for Denmark's support in this respect has been drawn up. The plan expects Danish funds in the order of $100 million dollars to be used in the region in 1999 and around $120 million dollars in the year 2000.

The reconstruction of Kosovo is important. It includes the establishment of a well-functioning civil administration. The United Nations family and many non-governmental organizations are undertaking important tasks which deserve our full support. All parties must strive to heal the wounds of conflict.

International relations and international cooperation are not based on a one-issue agenda. Certain issues may grab and almost monopolize the headlines for a while. In Europe we have to deal with the Balkans. But we must not neglect the other important issues on the international agenda, in particular international development cooperation and the struggle for the eradication of poverty.

In a world where a third of the population of developing countries earns less than $1 per day, where 30 per cent of all children under five in those countries are underweight, where 14 per cent of the population will not attain the age of 40, where financial crisis has led to a major setback in poverty reduction — in such a world development cooperation must remain an integral part of the effort of the international community to promote and protect human security and human development.

The international community must acknowledge its share of the responsibility for making the opportunities of globalization available to all. Globalization must not become identical with protected and selective prosperity.

Eradication of poverty is an essential goal in its own right. Furthermore, poverty is an important cause of conflict. And again, violent conflict may undo the results of decades of development. Development cooperation, therefore, constitutes an effective crisis-prevention effort for the long term.

International development cooperation must be based on the fulfilment as soon as possible of the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product for official development assistance and on implementing the decisions of the big United Nations conferences of recent years with regard to human and social development, eradication of poverty, sustainable development and gender equality. The follow-up conferences to the Beijing conference and, in the year 2000, to the Copenhagen summit are important events requiring our full attention.

Denmark stands by these commitments. We will continue our policy of contributing 1 per cent of our gross national product to official development assistance. Poverty reduction is the prime goal of our development cooperation programmes. In addition, we are providing funding to help address global problems in the field of the environment as well as peacekeeping and conflict prevention. These grants will grow in the coming years, reaching half of 1 per cent of gross domestic product by the year 2005, thus bringing Denmark's total contribution to international assistance to 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product.

Creating an enabling environment for development is a challenge, first of all for developing countries themselves. Reforms cannot be imposed from the outside. If they are to succeed, local ownership and local roots are essential. Official development assistance has an essential role to play in helping the poorest countries, particularly in Africa. Official development assistance also assists in building up the sectors that do not attract private investment: health, education, the social sectors and capacity-building in general. In this way, countries may also, eventually, become able to attract private investment and to avail themselves of the opportunities of international trade.

In this context, it is deplorable to see official development assistance reaching its lowest point ever. Honouring the commitments of official development assistance entered into internationally by industrialized countries has become a question of credibility. It is also a question of the effectiveness of the multilateral system. The United Nations system cannot perform the tasks we ask of it if we deny it the necessary means. The downward trend of official development assistance must be reversed and a higher share should be multilateral.

Many poor countries are crippled with debt hampering their development. We therefore welcome the proposals to improve the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative. We are, however, disappointed by the lack of progress in financing the Initiative. We appeal to the major donor countries to live up to their responsibilities following the debt declaration of the Cologne summit.

Besides aid, not instead of aid, developing countries need trade. In the forthcoming new global trade round, every effort must be made to ensure better market access for developing countries and to enhance their real capacity to take part in international trade.

The pursuit of human security and human development are not two independent paths. They are interrelated. Without economic and social development, it makes no sense to talk about human security. Where security does not exist, there will be no sustainable development. When violent conflict erupts, the results of decades of development may be undone in a very short time. We must uphold the importance of both concerns and we must emphasize that they are a national as well as an international responsibility.

We thus face a major challenge at the threshold of the next millennium — a challenge we should give proper attention to at the Millennium Assembly next year.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the Minister of External Affairs of India, His Excellency Mr. Jaswant Singh.

Mr. Singh (India): It is a particular pleasure to see Mr. Gurirab presiding over the last session of the General Assembly of the twentieth century. I consider myself singularly fortunate and greatly honoured to be representing my country, India, on this occasion. I do believe that, in the many years that he spent here pursuing the dream of independence for his people — which, happily, is now a reality — he, more perhaps than others, has seen the United Nations at its best. That is why the perspective that he brings to the office of the President, enriched as it is by living through the very articles of faith of the United Nations, is near unique. I am sure we will all profit from it.

I take this opportunity also to warmly welcome three new Members to the United Nations: Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga. I have no doubt their presence shall enrich our deliberations.

Even as I address this Assembly, the century draws to a close and the world prepares to meet the year 2000. It is only appropriate and instructive, therefore, to look back and to reflect upon the journey that humanity set out upon 100 years ago. Where did we think we were then headed and where have we actually reached? Could any then foresee what 1999 would bring? Thus, are there, in the passage of the years that have gone by, any landmarks that could indicate a path for our future? For that, we need to assess the twentieth century, and there is but one yardstick by which we can judge: the criteria of the stated objectives of the United Nations.

Indisputably, the twentieth has been the bloodiest of all centuries. But, in contradistinction, it has also been a century of the most profound transformations and of the most significant social, political and technological advancements. This, above all, has been the century of the ascendancy of the individual and of democracy. It is that period in which dynasties vanished and revolutions swept empires off the face of ancient lands. Centuries-old colonialism became history against the irresistible heave of the colonized to reclaim their lands, their souls, so that oppressed humanity could regain a voice, a say in its own political and economic destiny. It is the century in which we plumbed the depths of the oceans and soared into the infinities of space; when man first set foot on the moon, reached Mars and even deeper into the recesses of the unknown. In a wired-up world, the computer has today become what the fountain pen was in the early years of the twentieth century. The revolution of the digital has arrived.

Humanity today is healthier, better fed and more sheltered than our forefathers were. But want and hunger, disease and deprivation are still widespread, including in developed societies. We have at our command more information than ever before, but are we that much wiser? Literacy has spread, but is mankind better educated? We are more connected globally, but are we as humankind? Have this linkage and interconnection reduced conflict and animosity? And thus, the tabulation of our assets and liabilities of this century flows.

As we have improved upon and added to almost everything that we inherited in 1900, so most sadly have we to violence, too. This century has been the most bloodthirsty, perhaps because it is in these last 100 years that humanity has employed science to perfect means of killing as never before. Our passage has seen us move from the Gatling gun to a world menaced today by MIRVs. That early machine gun, the then-great mower

down of the early 1900s, seems today almost a toy by comparison. We have split the atom, but employ the released energy less for peace and more for weapons of unimaginable destruction. Chemical defoliants and sophisticated biological weapons are also this century's contribution.

The century that passes experienced not two, but three great wars. Each was a cataclysm, fought globally and at enormous cost. When the first ended, the survivors emerged from the trenches, searching for a better world so that war would not recur. In response, we created the League of Nations. But war, regrettably, was not avoided. The League failed because we failed the League. And thus followed the second great war, at the end of which the world emerged armed with weapons that could destroy all that human genius and ingenuity had created and every vestige of life. But, from the ruins and devastation of the second also emerged the United Nations, with mandates of broader powers and responsibilities. The third great conflict was the cold war. This deeply affected, shaped and influenced the development of the United Nations. This war, too, extracted a heavy price, directly and through proxy conflicts, as well as political and social upheavals, but then these became its epilogue. What significance lies in the observation that no global peace conference has taken place to mark the end of this last war?

The United Nations could have been cast anew, made contemporary and democratized, drawing upon our collective experience to tackle new challenges with greater responsiveness. Can we, even now, do something at this last session of the General Assembly of this millennium to correct this? Can we pledge afresh to invest this institution with faith, commitment, political will and the resources that it needs to make it the vehicle capable of realizing the aspirations of all humanity, an instrument that will steer planet Earth into the next century?

We do not enjoy an abundance of options. The sapping of the vitality or the diminishing of the centrality of the United Nations must not be permitted. We have but one Earth, and there is but one United Nations.

Another development of this century, of crucial significance, is the transformation that we have experienced in the role of the State. From an agency that controlled and regulated all spheres of human activity, we move into a phase wherein the State must become more supportive, caring and encouraging of the citizen's individual and collective endeavours; it must release, not contain, the energies and genius of its people.

It would be an error, however, to assume that the days of the State are over. The State continues to have a crucial role and relevance; also, therefore, do national sovereignties. The United Nations was not conceived as a super-State. It will not ever become so, principally because there is no viable substitute for the sovereign State. Even globalization can work only through State intermediaries. To diminish, marginalize or ignore the State would also be bad practice, because the weaker the State is rendered, the less it shall be able to promote the interests of its citizens. The State needs to be strengthened functionally, not weakened. Besides, it is axiomatic that a United Nations of weak nations can only be a weak United Nations.

Globalization is an idea that has re-emerged, but also its reverse: fragmentation. The first is politico-economic, the second entirely political. Let us dwell a bit on this. Obviously, the technology that is driving this process can now scarcely be unlearned; the speed of travel and of communications will only increase; the age of the digital, as I said, has dawned. However, though globalization may apparently be driven by impersonal market forces, it is in reality impelled by power seeking political and financial advantage. It is, in essence, a political process, and if history teaches us anything, it is that such processes are not linear. Simply in terms of economic indicators, the world was as globalized at the turn of the century as it is now. A backlash followed: barriers went up, confrontation replaced cooperation and the world jostled into the tensions that led to the first great war. Are we, for the sake of temporary gain, perhaps even unwittingly, repeating yesterday's mistakes? Political hindsight tells us that globalization has to be politically directed for creating equal economic opportunity, both within States and among States.

In India, we cherish the creative genius of the people. We believe that Indian excellence lies in the freedom of the individual. We do not subscribe to constricting choice through State impositions. But can free markets offer true freedom of choice to those that are not even a part of the market? That is why the State continues to have the responsibility to protect the needy, to strengthen the weak. That is a part of our democratic creed, too.

We note that human rights have been made a cross-cutting theme of the work of the United Nations. That is important. The flowering, however, of human rights requires economic development and growth because many of the deprivations faced by individuals, whether in the

developed or in the developing world, are rooted in marginalization created by poverty. We believe, therefore, that development should be the cross-cutting theme of the United Nations and that the multilateral development system, which has been one of its successes, must be strengthened, its focus narrowed to the core challenges of economic growth with social justice, and it must be given the resources it requires to respond to the needs of the developing countries. The international community will find that no investment yields better returns.

I have the honour to address the Assembly as a representative of the largest democracy in the world. Even now, as I share these thoughts, an electorate of about 600 million, matching the combined populations of the United States, Canada and Western Europe, is going through the exciting process of democratically electing its next Government in my country. It is an awe-inspiring spectacle, this unstoppable flow of the great Ganga of Indian democracy. It is a democracy whose economy grew by more than 6 per cent last year, even in the aftermath of the major shocks to the international economy brought about by what was described as the East Asian meltdown of the mid-1990s.

We move with the challenges posed by globalization, without either retreating into a "fortress India" or abandoning our social objectives. We have worked out our own answers and devised our own policies to meet these new challenges because we hold that the sheer diversity of mankind dictates differences in approach, in human beings' respective search for relevant alternatives. This is a truth borne out by the fact that the twentieth century has been witness to the detritus of many false certainties.

Today, when capital moves without almost any constraint, it is virtually impossible for developing countries to resist either its demands or manage the consequences of its sudden departure. Let us reflect upon the absence of order, system or any global oversight of currency flows, particularly short-term flows, even as we attempt to bring order and equity to trade in goods, services and commodities. But how are we to address the problem when currency, instead of being a vehicle of trade, has in itself become a commodity of trade, when the volume of trade in currency daily has outstripped global trade in goods and services or even global gross national product manifold?

If globalization is to benefit all, and as we simply cannot accept that wheels of progress should grind down the common man, then surely some new international regulation, some order, is needed here. Let the United Nations take the initiative to hold an urgent international conference on financing for development.

In the political domain, too, managing change demands openness and reasoned discourse, an essential ingredient of which is abjuring violence. That is why terrorism is the very antithesis of all that the United Nations represents and stands for. Terrorism is the great global menace of our age. In this age of democracy, it is a violation of the very basic precepts of it. Because its principal targets become the innocent, it is a crime against humanity, a violation of basic human rights. It is also now a grave threat to international peace and security. That is why I urge that we strengthen the international consensus against terrorism. India has called for a comprehensive international convention against terrorism. We hope to make progress on the issue in this session of the General Assembly.

We also know how terrorism uses the international financial system, how it exploits the breakdown of countries and societies, and how it has preyed on the nexus between drugs and the proliferation of small arms. Thus, today, we witness a scimitar of narco-terrorism cutting across the Caucasus to the South Asian subcontinent. Two of the world's largest sources of illicit drugs flank us. Terrorism financed by drugs has for years been the deadly export of our neighbours.

Here the crippling intermixing of cause and effect is cruelly exemplified in Afghanistan. The world has been witness to the decades-old distress of the innocent men, women and children of that country. The disorders of Afghanistan, and the near anarchy into which that country has been pushed, are a consequence, chiefly, of the play of external forces and of a reversion to medieval fundamentalism of the most obscurantist variety. This disorder now overspills; it is also exported. It is not that human rights, particularly of women and children, are routinely violated there; they simply do not exist.

Our relationships with this neighbour are ancient and rooted in a past that we share. That is why we urge this Assembly to be seized of the enormous human suffering of the Afghans, and to encourage and support the early formation of a Government truly representative of all sections of that society and country.

Terrorism is a menace to which open societies are vulnerable; it becomes particularly difficult for democracies to counter when terrorists are armed,

financed and backed by Governments or their agencies, and benefit from the protection of State power. Cross-border terrorism, sponsored from across our borders, has taken the lives of thousands of our citizens and ruined those of countless others. We will counter it, as we have done over the past decades, using the methods available to a democracy. India will defeat such forces. That is both our duty and our obligation to our citizens.

Earlier this year India was subjected, yet again, to an act of premeditated aggression. In February this year, hoping yet again to set aside the sterility of relations of the past half century to set the South Asian subcontinent on the path of development, with a view to addressing the real adversaries of our region — poverty, want and hunger — Prime Minister Vajpayee extended a hand of peace, amity and cooperation to neighbouring Pakistan. The pathbreaking bus journey from Delhi to Lahore followed. In Lahore we concluded a triad of agreements, among which was the Lahore Declaration. It was the route chart of moving towards lasting amity and peace.

This act of faith was betrayed. Premeditated aggression by regular forces was committed against India. Not simply was the Lahore Declaration violated, but so was the Simla Agreement, which had prevented conflict for more than a quarter of a century. In self-defence, yet with the utmost restraint, India took all necessary and appropriate steps to evict the aggressor forces from its territory. Most regrettably, this aggression has set back the Lahore process of peace that we had initiated. For whereas aggression over territory can more easily be vacated, that territory of trust which has been transgressed is infinitely more difficult to restore.

Permit me, Sir, to draw attention to the fact that this aggression upon India in Kargil was a demonstration of wanting to hold to ransom the world, through an act of aggression. It was also a manifestation of the larger disorders that the world has been witnessing in Afghanistan.

There is an aspect that I stress. It was a gross violation of the Geneva Conventions when Indian soldiers taken prisoner were tortured, subjected to inhuman treatment and killed in captivity. These violations took place at a time when the international community has repeatedly been trying to establish the rule of law, stripping away the layers of impunity that have protected those who give the orders that lead to violations of international humanitarian law.

And it is thus that I find it necessary to reiterate some essential verities of Indian nationhood. From the earliest days of our struggle against imperialism and colonial rule it has been an unquestionable article of faith with us that India is one nation: a nation of many faiths, a diversity of beliefs, a cultural harmony arranged through the interplay of myriad forms and manifestations, but a unity, strengthened by its pluralism, that is beyond question. And of this is born India's democratic vitality, too. Also of this oneness and unity, the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part, and shall remain so. Because this is not any territorial dispute; it is the assertion of two antipodal approaches to national identity. India has never represented denominational nationhood; it is civic nationalism to which we subscribe. That is why Jammu and Kashmir is not a so-called core issue. It is at the very core of Indian nationhood.

Yet the path of the India-Pakistan composite dialogue process is open. No preconditions attend it. The only essential ingredient that remains is an abjuring of violence and cross-border terrorism, principles that are integral to both the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration — indeed, the very process of peace itself. This process needs to be resumed.

We have been greatly disappointed by this compulsive hostility of Pakistan, because it is an aberration in our region today, where all the other South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries are at peace with each other, and are trying, bilaterally and through the SAARC mechanisms, to tackle together the great challenge of development. But we remain unshaken in our vision of cooperation and shared prosperity of the South Asian region, as embedded in the Charter of SAARC, as well as in our faith in the ability, talent and will of the people of the region to take their rightful place in the world community. The destiny of all our peoples is linked. It is a region with a collective history reaching back to the beginnings of human history and of the highest civilizational accomplishments. In striving to attain the promise of the future in our region, we also see the recovery of a great past.

This is perhaps the right juncture at which to say a few words about pluralism in an age of globalization. Though we find sterile the debate over universal and regional values, extreme positions are still taken on both sides. In a spirit of engagement, we would urge our partners in the West to be a bit more tolerant, and a bit more introspective. While all democratic Governments try to promote good governance, human rights and social

responsibility, the perspective they approach them from, and their ability to implement them, vary. Rigidly applying, as a universal paradigm, value systems that reflect the state of western economies and societies in the late twentieth century, produces an inevitable reaction, which does not make either for dialogue or constructive decisions.

Globalization has also influenced our thinking on security issues by generating a greater awareness about new security concerns. Equally important, with the end of the cold war there is a growing realization that peace cannot be maintained through balance of power or hegemonic order. To maintain global peace and security, to deal with threats of a global nature, the international community has to accept the concept of collective security. The United Nations provides a framework for such a contract among nations. With the cold war behind us, the General Assembly should reactivate this framework.

Global nuclear disarmament was the objective set out by the 1946 General Assembly in the first resolution that it adopted. That objective still beckons us.

I say this as the representative of a country that has been obliged to acquire nuclear weapons because of the failure of the existing non-proliferation regime to address our primary security concerns. Yet let me also state with full conviction that India's commitment to global nuclear disarmament stands undiluted. India is the only nuclear-weapon State ready to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention that will prohibit for ever the development, production, stockpiling, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons and provide for the elimination of all existing weapons under international verification.

If this can only be a step-by-step process, the first step at a technical level is for all countries possessing nuclear weapons to take measures that will reduce the dangers of, and provide added safeguards against, any unintended or accidental use. Coupled with this is the political step of reorienting nuclear doctrines, towards no-first-use, and then non-use, thus delegitimizing nuclear weapons globally. Independent expert opinion across the globe has spoken strongly in favour of such measures. In fact, every single study that has been published since the end of the cold war on the measures to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world has highlighted the need for shifting to doctrines based on no-first-use and non-use, and technical measures towards de-alerting, as the inevitable first steps in the process. We have taken initiatives to urge the international community forward on both counts, and hope that in this General Assembly session the Indian initiatives will receive the unanimous support that they merit.

Last year my Prime Minister declared in this Assembly that India was engaged in discussions on a range of issues, including the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). These discussions are in process and will be resumed by the newly- elected Government of my country. Our position remains consistent. We remain ready to bring these discussions to a successful conclusion. Naturally, this requires the creation of a positive environment as we work towards creating the widest possible consensus domestically. We also expect that other countries will adhere to this Treaty without any conditions.

Notwithstanding India's readiness to engage in constructive negotiations on a treaty to prohibit the future production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva has so far, sadly, been unable to register any forward movement. This, too, is something to ponder over, for we all know that a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) can only contribute to our shared objective as part of a step-by-step process. Let us then overcome this reluctance and agree to look beyond the FMCT.

So, at the end of this centennial audit, what is it that we would want the United Nations to do in the first few years? It is clear that there are two major problems facing the United Nations as an institution: Security Council reform and the United Nations financial crisis. These need to be addressed. The Security Council must be made more representative, with developing countries inducted as permanent members, to reflect the changes in the United Nations membership and today's political realities. As we said earlier, on any objective criteria, India's credentials for permanent membership are persuasive.

Sustainable and environmentally sound development is a goal to which India continues to attach the utmost importance. In 2002 we will complete a decade of Agenda 21, adopted at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992. I trust that the current session of the General Assembly will put in place a preparatory process for the "Rio + 10" review. This will enable the Member States to take stock of the implementation of the commitments undertaken by the Member States in Agenda 21 over the past decade. Such a process is vital for attaining our

common goal of sustainable and environmentally sound development.

This century has shown us that our challenges are common; they are intertwined. Problems flow across boundaries, they batten on each other. Political, security, economic and social challenges are braided around each other; when they form a knot, that has to be cut by all of us together. Here, and nowhere else, can we do this. It is convenient to look at security issues in the First Committee, at economic issues in the Second, at human rights and social issues in the Third, and so on, but we often do not see them together, and so fail to use the United Nations as we should.

May I, in conclusion, therefore, propose that in the next decade the United Nations endeavour to address the most urgent problems that face us today. We have to do this as a unity of nations, as also of issues, for it is evident that solutions in one field will depend on, or be facilitated by, progress in another. Without tackling them together we will fail to address them at all. Therefore, may I urge the Assembly to consider the following areas for action in the opening years of the next decade: an international conference on financing for development; binding, irreversible steps to reduce the dangers of use of nuclear weapons; reform and expansion of the Security Council; a comprehensive convention against terrorism; and strengthening of the United Nations development system in this era of globalization.

I leave you with a *sloka* from the *Rigveda*. Though written 5,000 years ago, it reaches across time to us as at this session of the General Assembly, in the last year of the twentieth century. In translation, it reads,

> "Be of one heart, one mind and free of hate.
> Let your aim be common, your assembly common,
> United your mind and thoughts;
> May you make your resolutions with one mind,
> Perform your duties righteously.
> Let our hearts be together".

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*) : I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, His Excellency Mr. Boris Shikhmuradov.

Mr. Shikhmuradov (Turkmenistan): First of all, permit me to congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Namibia, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly. I would also like to express words of gratitude to Mr. Didier Opertti Badán for his dynamic and competent work during the entire course of the preceding session.

For the United Nations, last year — if it were measured by the magnitude of military and political upheavals — would be equal to a calendar year that thrust upon mankind natural calamities that had catastrophic effects on people. In many respects it was a year from which we had to draw lessons. It made us ponder seriously the political survival of States and the physical protection of people. It made us take a fresh look at the system of international relations, which was helpless in the face of the new challenges of the times. Nowadays we can no longer write everything off as costs of the cold war.

That is why we have paid special attention to the part of the Secretary-General's report in which he tried to give a analysis of present-day conflicts. Those conflicts, because of the nature of their origins and the dynamics of their evolution, did not always yield to traditional forms and methods for their successful resolution. There is a fact described in the report that requires special consideration, namely, that over the past decade 90 per cent of armed conflicts took place inside States and not between them. This phenomenon shows how relevant the problem of statehood is, as well as defining the correct orientation, in choosing the road to development in today's world. The preservation of national unity, inter-ethnic harmony and social guarantees, coupled with a reasonable pace of reform, can today be considered as the basic universal criteria for ensuring the peaceful development of every nation. This statement is substantiated by the experience of our newly independent State, which managed to avoid many cataclysms in the difficult period of its emerging statehood.

This is the eighth time that Turkmenistan has taken part in a session of the General Assembly as an independent subject of international relations. Without the active support of our friends, it would be hard to imagine the state of Turkmenistan's development today, which allows us to look with optimism at the future and to establish long-term programmes of social and economic development. In this regard, we are grateful to our close neighbours — Iran, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan, China and India — and our partners in the Organization for Security and Coopération in Europe. From a conceptual point of view, the system of Turkmenistan's international relations is based on sincerity and reciprocity of mutual interests,

neutrality and non-alignment, which form the two pillars of our statehood.

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to express words of gratitude to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to emphasize its large-scale activities, which merit all-round support. The Government of Turkmenistan, together with UNDP, has undertaken a number of major national projects that have yielded concrete results in the reforms of the social sphere, public health, the system of education and other areas. Turkmenistan intends to continue to maintain close ties with that important agency of the United Nations, with the aim of identifying and implementing new opportunities for cooperation. In view of the major development tasks lying ahead, UNDP personifies for us the United Nations system as a whole.

Purposeful cooperation between specialized agencies of the United Nations and national Governments makes it possible to identify the main parameters of the conflict-prevention strategy in each individual region. Ever-increasing flows of refugees and displaced persons to neighbouring countries from conflict areas and zones of national disasters are fraught with a certain potential for tension. As regards this important matter, we attach great importance to the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Government of Turkmenistan, together with UNHCR, is implementing an ad hoc programme of assistance to refugees that is based on a joint plan of action.

In close relation to the above subject, I would like to draw attention to the situation in Afghanistan, which continues to cause serious concern. Historically, Turkmenistan had close fraternal ties with that long-suffering nation. Hence, we have a sincere interest in the re-establishment of peace and the restoration of Afghanistan. Since the first days of independence, Turkmenistan built its relations with Afghanistan on the basis of mutual trust and respect. Our position is absolutely transparent and clear: neutrality with respect to the parties to the conflict; a constructive attitude towards and a due accounting of the realities of today's Afghanistan; a desire to engage conflicting parties in a dialogue; and creative economic reconstruction programmes.

It is precisely this desire that underpinned our initiative of holding two rounds of direct inter-Afghan talks in Ashgabat early this year, which were supported by the two key factions and bore fruit, giving hope for the future. However, in our opinion, this process did not receive adequate support from the outside, from those who are more prone to making declarations of good intentions and advancing their own interests rather than taking practical steps to help the Afghan people. Turkmenistan has been working on the Afghan issue and will continue to work on it under any format of international cooperation, including the mechanism of the "six plus two" group under the auspices of the United Nations, as that mechanism possesses an enormous untapped potential. We all have grounds to raise this issue because we have actually encountered a situation that may not be the best one for the United Nations, which has financed a Special Mission in Afghanistan — a Mission that until now has failed to produce any practical results. Smoothly written reports should not substitute for real political work in the field.

We share a commonly held view that the United Nations system needs rational reform in the twenty-first century. The Millennium Assembly, on the theme of the United Nations in the twenty-first century, will become a major landmark in this process, and Turkmenistan wholeheartedly supports the idea of holding such a session. That Assembly could provide a unique opportunity to identify the problems that we will face in the future and to undertake a creative process of strengthening and enhancing this unique institution.

Statements by heads of delegations at the current session contain many ideas regarding the need to reform the United Nations and the Security Council and to balance the right of veto, among many others. Turkmenistan adheres to the view that while seeking to improve the situation, the most important thing is to take a well-considered and balanced approach to the solution of the issues concerning the destiny of the Organization, rather than cause it harm by becoming hostage to emotions. It is our opinion that while encountering some glitches in the work of the mechanism, we should not rush into its complete replacement but should try to properly diagnose the weakness in the available resources. It may be a case of the problem not being in the system itself, but rather in those who are called to represent it at various levels.

Turning once again to the problem of the elaboration and implementation of a system to prevent conflicts and ensure safe development, I would like to emphasize that the foreign policy course of neutrality pursued from the outset by Turkmenistan has always been aimed at precisely this goal. It is explicitly mentioned in the Secretary-General's report that the struggle for control

over economic resources is one of the main causes of conflicts. Therefore the implementation of the foreign policy initiative concerning Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality, in the form of a special resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 12 December 1995, has a very important meaning in this regard. The development of the extremely rich hydrocarbon resources of the Caspian basin is tied to the interests not only of regional countries but also to those of major Powers and transnational companies. Turkmenistan's neutrality is aimed at a situation of combined rather than conflicting interests.

We believe that in today's world there can, and should, exist zones of interest, but we resolutely oppose the concept of spheres of influence. The issue concerning the status of the Caspian Sea is highly relevant in this respect. We have on numerous occasions stated our position on this issue: we would like to prevent the work on the status of the Caspian Sea from turning from an international law problem into a political problem. In any case, we cónsider it appropriate at this forum to draw attention to this issue, so that we can avoid the politicization of issues concerning the legal definition and development of the energy resources of the sea and underline Turkmenistan's readiness for constructive partnership and clearly defined reasonable compromises.

The highly complex nature of the tasks facing States Members of the United Nations is clear. The momentous challenges confronting the Organization are commensurate with the hopes of people around the globe, who believe that real change for the better will take place with the change of epochs. This concerns both large and small nations, the rich and the poor, newly independent and long-existing States. We all face challenges that can be overcome only by means of collective efforts, recognizing at the same time individual responsibilities. Such is the logic of Turkmenistan's political behaviour and its readiness to be an active Member of the Organization.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, Mr. Jan Kavan.

Mr. Kavan (Czech Republic): By way of introduction, let me congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly and wish you every success in the execution of your important functions. I would like to use this opportunity also to express thanks to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for his responsible work and for the efforts he has devoted to United Nations activities throughout the year.

The Czech Republic is very pleased that after five years the Assembly again has an opportunity to welcome new United Nations Members — Nauru, Kiribati and Tonga. This further expansion of the United Nations family is evidence of its increasingly universal nature, which the Czech Republic unequivocally supports.

This year marks an important milestone for the Czech Republic, which this past spring became a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), together with Hungary and Poland. Recalling Article 1 of the Washington Treaty, which refers to the United Nations Charter and commits its members to address international conflicts by peaceful means, we believe that this historic first enlargement of the Alliance following the end of the cold war will contribute to the enhancement of stability and security, and do so not only in our region. We support NATO's continued enlargement through the inclusion of other countries, and we are convinced that this first step will also have a motivating and mobilizing character for them.

NATO's new strategic concept emphasizes its broad approach to security issues; it envisages the necessity of not only facing military risks but also of monitoring economic, social, environmental and political issues that may disrupt security and stability. NATO has demonstrated that it has both the functional mechanisms for crisis management and the capacities to manage humanitarian crises. However, there is an obvious need for the Alliance's potential to be fully utilized by an effective cooperation with the United Nations, which has the ability to oversee the restoration of civil administration and infrastructure. It is this close cooperation that underlines the fact that our commitment to peace is as strong as our will to challenge gross violations of human rights by military means. And, of course, the concept of regional security in Europe cannot be imagined without NATO's cooperating also with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Western European Union or the Council of Europe.

Because development in Europe is profoundly influenced by ever-deeper integration, the successful completion of the long-term process of our country's entry into the European Union is currently the highest-priority goal for Czech foreign policy. Having started accession talks in the spring of last year, the Czech

Republic is promoting political dialogue with the European Union member States and associated countries. Through our active involvement in the Common Foreign and Security Policy, we are assuming our share of responsibility for development in Europe and the world, obviously, to date, within the restrictive framework of our status as an associated country. We attach major importance to the social and environmental dimensions of European integration. We are fully aware that the importance of these dimensions will continue to increase in order to keep up with the advancement of globalization.

The disintegration of the bipolar world has brought about a transition from confrontation to cooperation given rise to efforts to create a new security architecture, and led to integration processes, particularly on the European continent. However, it has also brought about the resurgence of dormant threats and the emergence of new centres of instability. The Kosovo tragedy and other crises have brought us closer to recognizing the importance of the principle of the personal security of human beings and its guarantees as a precondition of peace and security in the world. The fact that the worst atrocities, which have nothing in common with the civilized world, are still being committed at the end of the twentieth century makes this recognition all the more sad and alarming. In this context, the Czech Republic would express its appreciation and support for the work of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. The Czech Republic is convinced that the international community's efforts should result in just punishment for all the atrocities committed.

The United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Robin Cook, correctly argued here that we must counter the culture of impunity. All criminals should be held to account. As Secretary- General Kofi Annan said, massive and systematic violations of human rights should not be allowed to stand, wherever they may take place.

Kosovo will be the benchmark for the success achieved by international institutions. Kosovo is now in a period when it is necessary to defend peace, a period in which to achieve political stability and democratization, economic stabilization and a gradual development of the region. The Czech Republic is interested in the region's stability in all respects. That is why it participated, in its capacity as the currently presiding country of the Central European Initiative, in the Stability Pact Summit meeting at Sarajevo and why it will be working towards democratization, economic reconstruction and security in the region. We are, of course, fully aware that this is far easier said than done. The obstacles on the road are numerous and enormous.

The United Nations plays an irreplaceable role in providing for international peace and security. The peaceful resolution of disputes will undoubtedly continue to be one of the main priorities of the United Nations. The Czech Republic therefore attaches great importance to the use of peacekeeping operations in dealing with crisis situations and supports the efforts directed towards their greater efficiency, particularly as regards their rapid deployment. Speed appears to be the key aspect in many cases. However, the United Nations must also have adequate funding to carry out this demanding role effectively; unfortunately, its financial resources are considerably limited at present because of the fact that some Member States fail to honour their financial obligations. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has been marked by these problems: the Mission was not financially secured to the degree which would have corresponded with the security situation at hand and with the very difficult task of restoring the civil administration in Kosovo. On the other hand, it was probably the most rapidly deployed mission in the history of the United Nations.

The importance of UNMIK is shown by the fact that, as the highest civilian authority in Kosovo, it coordinates activities of international regional governmental and non-governmental organizations. The Czech Republic greatly appreciates the positive cooperation between UNMIK and KFOR, although it is evident that the international security forces cannot in the long term replace civilian administration and police forces.

A major degree of responsibility lies on the shoulders of the United Nations, and especially on those of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, in Kosovo. I had an opportunity to get to know his difficult task at first hand during my visit to Pristina a few days ago. The Secretary-General's Special Representative needs the full support of the international community in his efforts, including the transformation of the UCK into a non-military Kosovo protection corps. The Czech Republic obviously supports all steps and measures which may bring about the establishment of a democratic and multi-ethnic society in Kosovo as stipulated by the Washington North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Summit. Unfortunately, during my stay in Kosovo I did not come across any convincing evidence that that vision could really be

implemented in any foreseeable future — just the contrary. The diminishing number of Serbs in Kosovo, the continuous threats of murder — even to very old Serbian ladies — the rising influence of a mafia, which Mr. Kouchner told me about, the ever-present spirit of revenge, the lack of trained police forces, the absence of local civil administration, the disease of corruption and rivalry between different sectors of the Kosovo Albanians are just some of the obstacles which have to be dealt with decisively in order to prevent the vision of the future from becoming nothing but a never-fulfilled dream.

I wholeheartedly agree with the Secretary-General's unequivocal statement that commitment to humanitarian action must be universal if it is to be legitimate. This means not only that our commitment to peace and stability cannot end with the cessation of hostilities but that we have to be seen to be objective and even-handed towards all ethnic groups, as well as towards all regions. I am glad to note that the recent argument that "East Timor is not Kosovo" was quietly dropped. The Secretary-General has said that humanity, after all, is indivisible; we have to wholeheartedly agree with him.

The Czech Republic intends to continue its involvement in peace operations under the leadership of both the United Nations and regional organizations, as borne out by, among other actions, the operation of Czech units under NATO command in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Kosovo. The first Czech policemen should arrive in Kosovo to join the UNMIK police force within the next five days. The number of police necessary to maintain civil order in Kosovo is now more than double the figure originally estimated, Mr. Kouchner told me. Police officials, not the military, are trained to investigate murders or, even more importantly, to take measures to prevent murders or other grave challenges to law and order. The Czech Republic is also prepared to consider sending military observers to the United Nations peace missions in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, of course, following a recent request we received from Australia and the agreement on the Security Council mandate, also to East Timor.

The Czech Republic is concerned about the developments in East Timor. We welcome the fact that after decades, the people of East Timor were given an opportunity to implement their right to self-determination, and we feel very shocked that the results of the referendum led to bloodshed and indiscriminate killings. Indonesia's acceptance of the United Nations military peacekeeping forces has made us confident that the United Nations will succeed in ensuring peace in that area.

Peace and security in crisis-ridden areas are also closely related to humanitarian relief, which is provided as a rule to afflicted civilian populations. A radical deterioration in the security situation may cause a devastating humanitarian crisis, as we have seen in Kosovo. Here, too, there is a need to look at the possibilities of simplifying the United Nations decision-making mechanisms. It is disturbing that, for example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees did not have sufficient resources and capacities to tackle the humanitarian crisis in that region, which was due mainly to somewhat rigid procedures.

One of the most important tasks of the international community is undoubtedly to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and to eliminate them completely. Our aim is still a world without any nuclear weapons. With regard to the forthcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to be held in the year 2000, the Czech Republic calls for overcoming the stagnation in negotiations on the relevant treaties supporting the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and for developing more positive attitudes, particularly on the part of nuclear countries, which will create a more favourable atmosphere in the disarmament process and lead to the adoption of clear, practical and implementable nuclear disarmament measures in the new millennium.

There is no question but that early ratification of the START II Treaty between the United States and Russia would help considerably to revive the disarmament process. We consider the achievement of universal applicability of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and their speedy ratification a very urgent task. In this respect, we particularly appreciate the CTBT ratification by France and by the United Kingdom. The Czech Republic hopes that the conference of CTBT countries, to be held at Vienna in October this year, will help to accelerate ratification in other countries.

We welcome efforts to improve the effectiveness of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and we continue to express our support for early negotiation of a verification protocol to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development,

Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

Regarding conventional arms, the Czech Republic supports all measures that contribute to greater transparency. It consistently fulfils its obligations to notify the relevant registers and supports the efforts for an expansion of their procedures which would cover additional types of weapons. The Czech Republic also fully shares the international community's grave concern over illegal transfers of hand-held and light weapons, and supports all measures required to stop such activities. In the context of the international efforts to limit and ban the use of anti-personnel landmines, I can inform the Assembly with satisfaction that, following last year's ratification of Protocol II to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, the Czech Republic has completed the process of ratifying the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and will soon deposit our ratification instrument with the Secretary-General. We support all efforts towards achieving universal applicability of that Convention. We continue to be involved in international activities focused on demining and on providing help to landmine victims.

The Czech Republic welcomed the enlargement of the Conference on Disarmament by another five countries, to which I extend warm congratulations. At the same time we express our hope that the Conference on Disarmament will succeed in overcoming the current stagnation and will start talks not only on a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for military purposes but also on other topical problems of arms control and disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, and on security guarantees for non-nuclear countries.

There is no doubt that this year has been a real test for the United Nations, as well as a critical test of transnational decision-making during crises. This test, so crucial for the future of the United Nations, has not yet been concluded and properly evaluated. It is not only Kosovo that has revealed that the United Nations in its present form does not make full use of its potential to be an irreplaceable vehicle for achieving the goals set out in the Charter. At the threshold of the third millennium, the Organization therefore looks for an answer to the question of how the international community can become a truly responsible community and what role the United Nations will play in this process.

In our view, the United Nations must first of all respond to the changed substance of conflicts in today's world. These are not classical conflicts between States but, in most cases, internal conflicts rather similar to civil wars. The United Nations and the international community in general face the need to clearly define the relationship between national sovereignty and the protection of human rights and ultimately to engage in a discussion on how they should support sensible civilian Governments that keep armed forces under control. In this context, we should clearly focus on the Secretary-General's argument about individual sovereignty and the right of every individual to control his or her own destiny.

Secondly, the urgency of a radical acceleration of the process of United Nations reform, particularly reform of the Security Council, is becoming increasingly evident. The Czech Republic fully supports the Secretary-General's reform efforts, and I would like to share the optimism concerning early substantial progress in reform negotiations which Mr. Annan expressed to me during our talks in Prague last July. I have to admit that we consider the results of this year's negotiations, especially those on Security Council reform, to be inadequate. This, of course, corresponds to the role of the United Nations during the initial stages of the Kosovo conflict. The composition of the Security Council requires change. The Czech Republic believes that the number of both permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council needs to be increased, while representation of developing countries has to be strengthened.

Thirdly, conflict-prevention mechanisms need to be created, and attention should be devoted to questions such as discrimination, poverty, access to raw materials and the arms trade. The arms trade does not include only extensive, elaborate weapons systems. It is the excessive accumulation of hand-held and other small arms which above all requires our tough response, because these personal weapons play a key role in most conflicts. I would like to express my full support for the call by the United Kingdom Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, to halt the illegal trade in small arms. Cooperation with regional organizations such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of African Unity, which may be more successful in dealing with conflicts, should also play a role in preventing conflicts. I very much welcome the Secretary-General's emphasis here on moving from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.

Fourthly, the role of the United Nations in the area of human rights and as part of a broader concept of human security should be considerably intensified. We welcomed the Secretary-General's personal statement in his address at this year's session of the Commission on Human Rights, in which he said, "I have made human rights a priority in every United Nations programme". This, it seems to me, accurately reflects the importance which the United Nations should give human rights issues in the future. The United Nations should ensure that the universal nature of human rights is accepted and projected as a leading principle for the conduct of the international community. By our joint efforts we should guarantee a dignified and complete life for every individual in the next millennium. It is unacceptable at the threshold of the new millennium to claim that human rights are relative and that their violation by sovereign States on their own territory is solely their internal affair and as such may not be a subject of interest to other members of the international community. If the United Nations were unable publicly to defend the existence of human rights, it would be unable to defend its own existence.

At the same time, let us not forget the Secretary-General's warning about the need to ensure universal legitimacy, which he issued in connection with the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia. Incidentally, the new Czech Government has adopted a foreign policy concept which regards human rights as one of its main pillars and which at the same time stresses the desirability of United Nations mandates for peace-enforcing operations.

Fifthly, it is in the vital interest of the United Nations for the world to step into the twenty-first century under the rule of law in international relations. The situation in the former Yugoslavia, including developments in Kosovo, clearly shows the extremely important role already played today by international judicial bodies in enhancing the prestige of international law and its gradual integration into the political decision-making processes. The implementation of international law by the United Nations international judicial bodies has considerable positive influence on how global public opinion perceives the United Nations itself.

Let me now touch briefly on one more serious problem. Recent earthquakes in Turkey, Greece and Taiwan have underlined the need for the world to be prepared to provide coordinated help to an area hit by a massive natural disaster. This experience should, in our view, lead to the further strengthening and deepening of the idea already presented some time ago, namely, the idea of the "White Helmets". The challenge is to extend "White Helmets" into regular international rescue forces under United Nations leadership, capable of coordinated action on the spot — naturally, with the consent of the countries receiving such assistance. The ultimate goal could be the formation of rapid- response international forces, formed of national contingents and permanently available, well-equipped expert groups which could be dispatched to the stricken area in a matter of minutes or hours.

In conclusion, let us remind ourselves once again that the future of the United Nations is primarily a matter of the political will of its Member States. Finding answers to the questions which have been raised at this year's session of the General Assembly is therefore not only up to the United Nations, but up to the entire international community. The Millennium Assembly should give us a major opportunity for finding answers to these questions. I also hope that the Millennium Assembly will contribute decisively to the acceleration of work on the United Nations reforms, the need for which was so clearly highlighted by the Kosovo crisis. I am sure that the recovery of the commitment to multilateralism and to the leading United Nations role in the struggle to uphold basic Charter values, such as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, is now in sight.

My traditionally cautious optimism was, I admit, slightly strengthened in this respect by listening here to some politicians representing countries with far more resources than the Czech Republic has at its disposal. Our resources are, unfortunately, fairly limited. Nevertheless, we will continue to support the United Nations and, as I have said, to participate in its missions to pour millions of dollars into humanitarian and development aid, and so on. The point I wish to make clear in this speech, even so late in the evening, is that we will always be ready to help.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I call on the representative of Pakistan, who wishes to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind delegations that, in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and 5 minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Haque: I am taking the floor to respond to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of India earlier

this evening, wherein he accused Pakistan of compulsive hostility towards his country. This statement is as disingenuous as it is hypocritical. In the light of history, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to be misled by Indian protestations of its pious intentions towards its neighbours.

Since its independence, Indian ambitions in the region and beyond, its proclivity for resorting to the use of force and its hegemonic and expansionist policies have been amply demonstrated on numerous occasions. To recap briefly, since its independence, India has occupied a number of territories by the use of force. I refer to the territories of Hyderabad, Junagadh, the Portugese territories of Goa, the Kingdom of Sikkim, Jammu and Kashmir and India's repeated aggression and imposed wars against Pakistan.

Indian ambitions have also impelled it to acquire nuclear weapons, thus plunging South Asia into a nuclear arms race. Pakistan's compulsion is to defend itself, to defend its sovereignty, to defend its territorial integrity and to defend its independence, since Pakistan has suffered the brunt of Indian aggression and has once been dismembered as a result of that aggression.

The Foreign Minister of India also referred to Jammu and Kashmir as the very core of Indian nationhood. If this indeed is the core of Indian nationhood, it must be a rotten core, because this core is built on the denial of the right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, pledged by India to the international community, to the Security Council and to the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Most of the nations represented in this body have acquired nationhood and independence as a result of the exercise of this inalienable right. No core of nationhood can be built on the denial of this basic right. If Jammu and Kashmir is the core of Indian nationhood, it is built on the violation and open flouting of the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council — incidentally, the very body in which India aspires to achieve a permanent seat — as well as of international law and morality.

If this is the core of Indian nationhood, it is built on massive repression, on murder, on arson, on the rape of women — since in Jammu and Kashmir in the last decade alone more than 60,000 innocent people have been murdered, thousands of women have been raped, entire villages have been burnt to the ground. No nation can pride itself on having a core that is based on these despicable actions. If this is indeed the core of Indian nationhood, the less said about it the better.

The facts of the Jammu and Kashmir situation are that Jammu and Kashmir is not a part of India and never has been a part of India. There are Security Council resolutions pledging to the Kashmiri people their right to self-determination. These were accepted by India. The people of Jammu and Kashmir have boycotted the most recent elections and earlier elections, the sham elections held by India. They have not participated in those elections in order to show their alienation and rejection of Indian rule.

There are more than 700,000 Indian soldiers and paramilitary forces engaged in efforts to quell the struggle of the Kashmiri people and to break their spirit through massive violations of their human rights, murders, atrocities, repression, custodial deaths and the destruction of Kashmir's economy. All this has been documented by international human rights organizations, such as Asia Watch, Amnesty International and a host of others, including some within India itself.

The Foreign Minister of India also referred to Kargil. Kargil was a manifestation of the continuing struggle of the people of Jammu and Kashmir to achieve their right to self-determination. Until such time as the Kashmiri people achieve their right to self-determination, their struggle will continue.

The Foreign Minister also took it upon himself to accuse Pakistan of torturing some Indian soldiers or killing them while they were in captivity. There could be no worse falsehood than this one. Pakistan abides by international law. It neither tortured nor killed any Indian soldier. It did not have to do so.

In the face of these false Indian accusations, we have now resorted to the practice of inviting International Committee of the Red Cross personnel to observe the handing over of any Indian soldiers who are imprisoned by Pakistan or captured by Pakistan when they cross over into our territory.

The Foreign Minister of India also talked about international terrorism. It is odd that he should have done so since it is India that has written the book on the practice of State-sponsored terrorism. India's State-sponsored terrorism against the Kashmiri people is well documented. India's State-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan has resulted in the deaths of thousands of

people, in random violence — all in an effort to break the spirit of the people, to sow divisions among them. And we have confessions of hundreds of Indian agents attesting to this fact.

Pious sentiments about democracy and pluralism do not mean anything unless they are put into practice. India is a country that talks of peace and builds nuclear arsenals. India is a country that talks of peace at the United Nations while it makes unremitting war on the innocent people of Jammu and Kashmir for having dared to ask for their right to self-determination.

The path to peace is indeed open. Pakistan has all along offered India a dialogue, a results-oriented dialogue.

We call upon India to take the first step on this path by ending its repression in Kashmir and entering into a dialogue with Pakistan, to find a just solution to the Jammu and Kashmir problem in accordance with the wishes of its people, as well as to all other outstanding issues between our countries.

The meeting rose at 9.05 p.m.

United Nations A/54/PV.10

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

10th plenary meeting
Thursday, 23 September 1999, 10.00 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Rexhep Meidani, President of the Republic of Albania

The President: The Assembly will first hear an address by the President of the Republic of Albania.

Mr. Rexhep Meidani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Albania, His Excellency Mr. Rexhep Meidani, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Meidani (*spoke in French*): Let me begin, Sir, by congratulating you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly, and to voice my full confidence that the work of this session, under your leadership, will be crowned with success. I wish also to express my great appreciation of the way in which your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, guided the work of the fifty-third session.

I take this opportunity also to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to the great United Nations family, and to convey to them our best wishes for the future.

I am pleased to say that this year has been marked by genuinely positive developments for Albania in the political, social and economic spheres. Albania has made progress in strengthening its democratic institutions and its civil society, in achieving respect for human rights and freedoms, and in enhancing public order and the rule of law.

As a new democracy, Albania is tireless in its efforts to strengthen and consolidate its institutional structures. There has been tangible progress in bringing about the independence of the legislative, executive and judicial branches. At the same time, efforts to coordinate them are moving forward without in any way affecting their separate identities.

The Albanian State and Government have given priority to economic development by promoting free initiative in the privatization process, principally in strategically important sectors. We have also made a continuous effort to formulate and implement modern legislation that can encourage and support domestic investment and can channel foreign investment into especially profitable vital sectors of our economy.

We have every reason to appreciate the beneficial cooperation between Albania and the World Bank, which has resulted in the implementation of projects of great importance to the Albanian economy, and also in their effective management. We are grateful too for the support of the International Monetary Fund, whose activities have made a great contribution to revitalizing my country's finances.

99-85866 (E)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

We are well aware that no State can have a healthy economy or a solid democracy without secure public order, the rule of law and a strong civil society. Among the thorniest problems now facing Albanian society and especially the Albanian State are neutralizing both common and organized crime and putting an end to corruption in certain sectors. Great efforts and substantial resources have been deployed in this area to increase the effectiveness of the police and other administrative structures engaged in crime-fighting. I take this opportunity to express my great appreciation for the assistance provided by the Multinational Advisory Police Element of the Western European Union and by a number of individual States, in particular for the restructuring and training of the Albanian police and for the provision of logistical equipment.

At the same time, I would like to say that the Government of Albania, and I myself, attach great importance to the direct commitment of the United Nations to the process of disarming the civilian population. I would like to take this occasion to congratulate Mr. Dhanapala on his last visit to Albania.

Considering corruption to be an extreme evil and a serious obstacle to the development of a healthy democracy, the Albanian Parliament and Government have adopted tough legislative and administrative measures to deal with it, establishing specific structures to better uncover and punish abuse of power in certain corrupt sectors of the administration and the judiciary.

During previous sessions, Albania has stated — and we still hold — that the main objective of our strategy is integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures and into other global and regional organizations. Our clear objective is to join the European Union, which we do not doubt for a moment can be achieved, so the Albanian Government considers as a fundamental priority raising the level of its relations with the European Union. I am glad to say that there has been a qualitative improvement in those relations. Cooperation has been intensified in various fields, which bodes well for the signing of an association agreement fairly soon.

There have also been positive developments in our rapprochement with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), following the modernization of the Albanian army, and above all thanks to the unreserved help provided to the NATO forces during the Kosovo conflict.

I am also happy to note that my country's efforts over many years to become a member of the World Trade Organization seem to be about to be crowned with success.

The work of the current session is taking place while Kosovo and the entire region are making efforts to heal the wounds inflicted by the Milosevic regime. The concerns expressed by the Albanian delegation at the fifty-third session with regard to the policy of "ethnic cleansing", which went as far as genocide, perpetrated by the Belgrade regime against the Albanian population of Kosovo, proved well-founded. In the framework of this chauvinistic policy, the most barbarous crimes were committed: tens of thousands of Albanians were massacred, thousands of houses were destroyed or set on fire, and more than half the population were expelled from their land and had to go to neighbouring countries, particularly Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro. Thousands of other people went into the mountains and lived in unimaginable conditions in order to escape certain death. The massacres at Raçak, Peja, Rahovec and Malishevo, the daily discovery of mass graves containing children, women, young people and old men and women, killed by the Serb army, militias and policemen, will continue to testify to a genocide without precedent on the threshold of the new millennium.

It is with horror that I condemn the execution of dozens of eminent Kosovar intellectuals and the imprisonment of hundreds of others.

The Milosevic regime ignored the warnings of the international community and its call for an acceptable resolution of the Kosovo crisis. It arrogantly rejected the proposals formulated in the Rambouillet agreement by the Contact Group and increased the repression of the Albanians in Kosovo, thus endangering peace and security in the Balkans. In these circumstances, the NATO countries, legitimately defending the sacred principles of the United Nations Charter, had to intervene militarily in order to force Belgrade to withdraw its armed forces from Kosovo.

We congratulate the international community on having shown on this occasion unlike the similar situation in Bosnia, a firm will to condemn the crimes perpetuated against a defenceless population, take effective measures to put an end to those crimes and establish peace in the troubled region of the Balkans.

The whole Albanian nation has expressed its profound gratitude to NATO, the United States of America, the United Nations, the Organization for

Security and Cooperation in Europe, and all the international forces which contributed to ending the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo and re-establishing peace there. In particular, I pay tribute to the action and the personal commitment of Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in the settlement of this conflict and the ending of the humanitarian crisis.

I also pay special tribute to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia for its commitment to public exposure of the crimes against the Albanian people of Kosovo and for becoming an interpreter for the whole Albanian nation in their just request that all those responsible for crimes against the innocent population be put in the dock. I call on all countries, especially those in our region, to cooperate with the Tribunal, as recommended in Security Council resolutions.

The Albanian State has done everything to ensure that the conflict in Kosovo is resolved as soon as possible and peace is re-established in the Balkans. Engaging in intense political activity, we have striven to ensure that the political forces in Kosovo adopt a common attitude and accept the Rambouillet peace plan. The Albanian State, while committing itself firmly to defending its territorial integrity and sovereignty, has refused to respond to provocations by Serb forces at the border. Albania has not fallen for Milosevic's manoeuvres designed to extend the conflict in the region.

Despite our great economic and financial difficulties, Albania has borne the burden of the humanitarian crisis of the refugees from Kosovo. Half a million Kosovars deported from their homes have found shelter among their brothers in Albania. Albanian families opened their doors to their blood brothers, thereby earning widespread respect for their generosity. As I recall this period, I would like to express our deep gratitude for he invaluable assistance given us by States and international organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, especially those working within the United Nations framework. The United Nations, implementing Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), is today, in the aftermath of the Kosovo crisis, playing a decisive role. The new civil administration, composed of representatives of the entire population of Kosovo, is almost in place, with the help in particular of the United Nations, the European Union and the OSCE; it is working feverishly in the edification, democratization and strengthening of a multi-ethnic civil society, with respect for human rights and a framework of institutions imbued by that respect.

KFOR is carrying out the difficult task of preserving stability and the fragile peace in the Kosovo region. I take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, for his efforts to attain the established objectives. I am confident that the United Nations and the organizations supporting it will continue their action so as to eliminate all negative factors that might compromise a secure and complete peace and the future of the Kosovo region. We support the efforts of all the international and Kosovar political forces to ensure peaceful coexistence between Albanians and the ethnic minorities in Kosovo. We express our wish and conviction that these efforts, based on Security Council resolution 1244 (1999), will be crowned with success.

The end of the conflict in the Kosovo region and the concern of the international community to transform the Balkans from the powder keg it has been into a region of peace and stability have given the countries in our region a historic opportunity to achieve development, prosperity and democratization. We have resolved not to miss that opportunity. First and foremost, our societies must abandon their archaic chauvinistic mindset, which has been the sources of division and hatred and which should no longer outweigh the desire for unity, friendship and cooperation among peoples.

We must struggle towards and succeed in quarantining all policies that encourage hatred and ethnic divisions, because such anachronistic policies have been the source of human catastrophes and remain one of the main causes of the destabilization of our region and the delay in our economic development.

Our countries share common interests in the strategic, economic and security spheres. In this regard, we want to become integrated into powerful structures such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). But it would not be realistic to think we will easily attain this objective. We fully realize that we are at the initial stage of this process. Thus we believe that all the countries of the region should coordinate their efforts in order to become — all together, not separately — integrated into those structures.

The Stability Pact on South-Eastern Europe is the fundamental document for the consolidation of democratic values, for economic growth and for the strengthening of security in our region. I take this opportunity to salute the full support provided to this initiative by the countries

of our region at the Cologne and Sarajevo meetings. The State and the Government of Albania support all efforts that have been undertaken within the political boundaries of the former Yugoslavia to promote democracy and the process of integration in the region. We welcome all democratic developments in Serbia, the consequence of which should be to remove from power the political group responsible for the crimes committed in the former Yugoslavia and to eliminate the chauvinistic mindset that encourages war. Such a mindset is no longer acceptable in civilized Europe.

The Albanian Government is adopting measures with a view to attaining the objectives of the Stability Pact. The immediate objectives include various ideas and concrete proposals aimed at the development of economic relations with the countries in the region, the creation of inter-Balkan institutions to monitor respect for human rights and the strengthening of security measures. The Albanian State expects that in the near future the Balkans will become a democratic region with an economy intended to reach the level of those of the developed countries, a region that respects human rights, in accordance with advanced European and global standards. We believe that because of the damage suffered during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and particularly in Kosovo, Albania deserves preferential treatment within the framework of the Stability Pact.

As far as we are concerned, the free circulation of people, ideas, capital and goods — a Balkan *mini-Schengen* — is the precondition for a rapid development of the economy, social life and democracy of our region. A democratic Balkans is unimaginable if our countries build walls in order to prevent the free circulation of people. Reciprocal free movement would contribute greatly to bringing people together and to cultural exchanges and, thereby, to the elimination of the hatred and inter-ethnic conflicts that up till now have so cruelly shaken this part of Europe.

Albania appreciates the role currently being played by the European Union, the United States of America and other countries in the framework of these positive developments. It hopes that this interest in the development and democratization of the region will persist with the same level of commitment and the same intensity.

While attaching priority to the problems of our region, the State and the Government of Albania have been and continue to remain attentive to developments in other parts of the world. We welcome the progress in the peace process in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. For my part, I would like to express the fervent hope that these processes prove irreversible.

We appreciate the role played by the United Nations in organizing the referendum on the future of East Timor. We hope the most recent agreements and resolutions, with the international presence, in particular that of the United Nations, will lead to the stabilization of the situation in that country as soon as possible.

Given the ever-growing importance of multilateral international cooperation, Albania intends to become an ever more active Member of the United Nations and of other international organizations, in order to be able to better contribute to safeguarding peace throughout the world. Albania salutes the efforts of the United Nations to continue to strengthen its role in resolving the acute problems facing humanity today in the political, economic and humanitarian spheres. I take this opportunity to express my great appreciation for the action of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, aimed at reforming and reviving the Organization.

In connection with this reform, Albania is in favour of the democratization and strengthening of the Security Council so that it better reflects new international realities and has more transparent procedures and working methods and a simplified decision-making process. We support the financial and budgetary reform of the United Nations, the objective of which is better management of financial resources and, thus, the increased effectiveness of United Nations programmes and projects.

Allow me to express once again to you, Mr. President, and to all the delegations present here my fervent wish that this session of the Assembly will meet with success in advancing global peace, stability and prosperity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Albania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Rexhep Mejdani, President of the Republic of Albania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President of the Republic of Cyprus, His Excellency Mr. Glafcos Clerides, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Clerides: I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session. I have no doubt that your long experience and proven diplomatic skills will guide the work of this session to a successful conclusion. Moreover, we interpret your election as a well-deserved recognition of your country, Namibia, for which the Cypriot people entertain feelings of admiration and friendship.

I would also like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Opertti of Uruguay, for the determined leadership with which he steered the work of the fifty-third session.

Cyprus joins other States in extending a warm welcome to the new Members of the United Nations: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga.

As we are rapidly approaching the dawn of the new millennium, we have an obligation to reaffirm our commitment to this truly global Organization and to the ideas that have made the United Nations the hope of mankind for a world governed by peace, justice and the rule of law.

And yet, the challenges that we face seem at times insurmountable. Our world is characterized by a large array of old and constantly emerging new problems, such as violent international conflicts and internal strife. Moreover, the United Nations has to respond to many challenges, such as the eradication of poverty, sustainable development, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, the control of epidemics and natural disasters, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The Organization's efforts in these areas have been considerable and must not be underestimated. I take this opportunity to reaffirm my Government's strong commitment to the United Nations and our support for the ongoing efforts to reform it, so that it will be able to successfully meet the considerable challenges that lie ahead.

Cyprus will work towards the successful conclusion of the Millennium Assembly. We look forward to an interactive Summit. We anticipate an in-depth and result-oriented discussion, with the participation of civil society, during the work of the many special sessions on various facets of the Organization's work.

One of the major issues of concern to all humanity is disarmament. I would like to reaffirm our support for these efforts including, *inter alia*, a strengthened review process of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the effective implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

In the field of human rights, the United Nations plays a very special role not only in developing and enhancing the regime of human rights instruments, but also in the prevention of possible violations and the constantly expanding humanitarian relief efforts.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions, we reaffirm our commitment to the cause of human rights and the promotion of humanitarian law. Cyprus fully supported the adoption of the Statute of a permanent International Criminal Court.

Cyprus follows the situation in the Middle East with intense interest. We rejoice at the winds of hope that have recently appeared in the efforts to finally achieve peace in that long-tormented area and welcome the recent Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Cyprus, as a neighbouring State with close relations to the parties involved in the Middle East, reiterates its support for a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the implementation of the peace accords.

The recent tragedy that has unfolded in Kosovo has demonstrated the fragility of peace in the heart of Europe and the imperative need to address a new array of problems that have the potential to destabilize an entire region. The international community, as well as the parties involved, have an obligation to create the conditions for reconciliation, so that what has transpired

in Kosovo and Yugoslavia in general will never be allowed to take place again.

Cyprus fully supports Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and calls for full respect for the human rights of all Kosovars, irrespective of their origin, as well as for the sovereignty of all States in the region. My Government also welcomes the initiative of the European Union that led to the adoption of the Stability Pact last June as an important initiative that will contribute considerably to the economic and political stabilization of south-eastern Europe and help its peoples construct a new future.

Cyprus welcomes the several United Nations initiatives and recommendations stemming from the follow-up to the report of the Secretary-General concerning Africa. The international community should redouble its efforts to assist the countries of Africa to overcome the ethnic strife and wars; to eradicate poverty; successfully to combat disease; to win the fight against drug trafficking; to obtain sustainable development; and to face the challenges of the future.

The recent devastating earthquake that struck Turkey has once more demonstrated the frailty of human beings before nature's incredible power of destruction. I take this opportunity to reiterate to the Turkish people our sympathy for the enormous losses suffered and to urge the international community to lend a helping hand for the reconstruction of the devastated areas. Despite the political problems that exist between our respective States, the magnitude of the suffering of the Turkish people has deeply moved the people of Cyprus.

I wish to congratulate all those countries which rushed to save Turkish lives, and in particular Greece, which, despite its many differences and problems with Turkey, was one of the first countries to send its teams to work side by side with Turkish teams to rescue the Turkish people who were buried alive under the ruins of the earthquake. I want also to congratulate Turkey for reciprocating in the same manner after the subsequent earthquake in Greece and I wish to salute the new spirit of friendship which has started to emerge between the two countries.

This year marks a quarter of a century since the Turkish invasion and unlawful occupation of 37 per cent of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus. I could today, from this podium, point an accusing finger at Turkey and talk at length about the ethnic cleansing it practised against the Greek Cypriots, which resulted in 180,000 Greek Cypriots becoming refugees in their own country. I could bring up the drama of the relatives of the 1,600 Greek Cypriots missing since the invasion of Cyprus by Turkish forces in 1974. I could point out the many violations of human rights of the Greek Cypriots by citing decisions of the European Court and reports of the European Commission of Human Rights, holding Turkey responsible for such violations. Today I will abstain from doing so, because I prefer to look to the future, and not to deal with the past.

We are currently waiting for the United Nations Secretary-General to issue invitations to both sides to take part in negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations, in the most ambitious initiative ever undertaken to find a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem.

This initiative enjoys the active support of the international community, and particularly the Group of the eight most industrialized countries, the Security Council, the European Union and the Non-Aligned Movement.

We are well aware that currently the international community, and especially those States which are in a position to influence the foreign policy of Turkey, are working methodically to persuade Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leader, Mr. Denktash, to participate in talks without any preconditions; that is, not to insist on the recognition of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and not to demand that negotiations be conducted between the two States, instead of communities, as envisaged in the Security Council resolutions.

Regrettably, on 16 September the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mr. Ecevit, in a public statement, not only insisted on the two preconditions I have just mentioned, but added that the economic embargo against the Turkish Cypriots must be lifted. The Prime Minister of Turkey knows that the so-called embargo is a result of a decision of the European Court, to the effect that certificates of origin and/or quality issued by the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus cannot be accepted by the European Union, because the State referred to is not recognized. The Prime Minister of Turkey should also be aware that there is a category of reciprocal measures that need to be discussed and resolved, and that the question of the embargo falls in that category.

I have already stated publicly, but also to the Secretary-General and to the heads of State or Government of the five permanent members of the Security Council, that we are ready to respond positively

to the Secretary-General's invitation to attend the talks and to negotiate a solution to the problem within the parameters established by the international community through Security Council resolutions. The parameters so established provide that Cyprus must be a bicommunal, bizonal federal republic, with a single sovereignty, an international personality and a single citizenship, and that the settlement must exclude union, in whole or in part, with any other country or any form of partition or secession.

My vision for the solution of the Cyprus problem within those parameters requires a partnership of the two communities that would constitutionally provide for the maximum degree of internal self-administration for the two constituent cantons, provinces or states. Adhering to the principle of the equal political status of the constituent parts, it must provide them with the same rights, powers and functions regarding their respective separate internal self-administration. The constitution must also provide for the effective participation of both communities in the federal Government.

Such a federation, becoming a member of the European Union, will thrive at home and abroad, enjoying genuine peace, stability and security, based on international law and legality. It will be supervised by an international force authorized by the Security Council, under terms and conditions so defined as to give the force the right to intervene if it finds that one community, by unlawful acts, puts in danger the safety of the other community or attempts to destroy the independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of the federal State or destroy the agreements reached.

I have stated that both communities must learn from the mistakes of the past and must work hard for the creation of a common and bright future for all, instead of clinging to attitudes which brought about the tragedy in the island. It is, therefore, imperative that we find a just, workable and viable solution which will safeguard the human rights of every citizen and heal the wounds of the past, bringing at the same time a sense of security to both communities by providing full disarmament under international supervision.

Our side will approach negotiations on the Cyprus problem with courage and flexibility, partly because we recognize that solving it is in the interest of all Cypriots, but also because that will contribute to the overall stability of the region, which is so much demanded by the international community.

I regret that Mr. Denktash is reported to have refused to respond positively to any initiative to negotiate with me as representative of the Greek Cypriot community, on the pretext that I am also the President of the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus.

Time and time again I have explained to him that I sit in the talks not as the President of the Republic of Cyprus, but as the representative of the Greek Cypriot community, because the Security Council resolutions call upon the two communities to negotiate, not upon the State of the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot community.

It also saddens me when he attempts to set aside the parameters for the solution of the Cyprus problem, set by the international community and the high-level agreements he made before the Secretary-General of the United Nations twice, for a bicommunal, bizonal federation. He attempts now to set new parameters for the solution, based on two separate sovereign States, and to impose their acceptance by refusing to come to the negotiating table unless his conditions are met.

In support of his precondition, he advances the argument that the term "equal political status", referred to in United Nations resolutions, must be interpreted to mean that his break-away Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus must be recognized, since the Republic of Cyprus is internationally recognized, in order that the two negotiators may have equal status. He forgets that the Security Council, by its resolution, deplored the action of the Turkish side of declaring a separate State, and asked all its members not to recognize it, a request with which all complied, with the exception of Turkey, the occupying Power.

The parameters for the solution of the Cyprus problem are already in place. They are included in the relevant United Nations resolutions. What is required is the political will of the two sides. I can assure the Assembly that the Greek Cypriot side stands ready to negotiate in good faith so that a bicommunal, bizonal Federal Republic of Cyprus will finally become a reality.

I join my voice with those of the G-8, the Security Council and the European Union in asking Mr. Denktash to come to the negotiating table without preconditions. I honestly believe that within the parameters of the Security Council resolutions we can find a solution which will safeguard the legitimate interests of both communities and bring peace and stability in the Eastern Mediterranean.

I wish also to repeat my invitation to the Turkish Cypriot community to join forces with us in our European Union accession course. That course, which is the greatest achievement since the establishment of the Cyprus Republic, is continuing with success. Accession to the European Union will benefit both communities equally.

The Cyprus problem has often been described as complicated and intractable. I do not share this view. The Cyprus problem can and will be solved if the international community demands its solution with the necessary determination, within the parameters it has set.

In the effort for the solution of the Cyprus problem, as a small State, Member of the United Nations, we rely on the support of the international community and the United Nations. We look upon its Charter as a beacon of justice, and on the United Nations as the hope for a better future.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Glafcos Clerides, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nigeria.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, His Excellency Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obasanjo: A little over two decades ago I addressed this Assembly as head of a military Government in Nigeria. On that occasion the focus of my statement was the urgent need to terminate colonial rule in Namibia and Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and dismantle the racist apartheid South Africa. Today it is a great source of joy for me and my delegation that a distinguished son of Namibia is presiding over the affairs of the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly. My delegation assures you, Sir, of its full cooperation and unwavering support throughout your tenure.

May I also convey through you, Sir, our deep appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti of Uruguay, for the able and efficient manner in which he conducted the proceedings of the fifty-third session.

Our appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his visionary leadership and the invaluable work of the Secretariat under his stewardship.

Permit me also to warmly welcome, on behalf of my country and delegation, the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga, which have just joined this family of nations.

I stand before this Assembly today very proud to be the leader of a Nigeria that has successfully managed the transition to democracy after a decade and a half of military rule. I would like to seize this opportunity to express the profound appreciation of all Nigerians for the international support and encouragement which combined so effectively with the relentless determination of Nigerians themselves to reconstruct and transform their country into a vibrant democracy.

Our Administration has raised the hopes of Nigerians, and their expectations are correspondingly high. We are well aware of the enormity of the challenges that we face. But we are fully resolved to tackle our numerous social, economic and political problems head on. And, by the Grace of God, we will not fail.

Since assuming office some four months ago our administration has put in place an institutional framework for the purpose of reconciling competing interests and groups in our society. Our democratic institutions are now operating effectively within the system of checks and balances enshrined in our Constitution. Furthermore, we have opted for a policy of inclusiveness in all our political appointments, with a Cabinet, for instance, in which all registered political parties are represented, thus moving away from the divisive practice of winner takes all.

Our Administration has initiated policies aimed at revitalizing the economy in order to create an enabling environment for investment and economic growth. We have also put in place an appropriate legal framework for the protection of foreign investments and repatriation of legitimate profits.

Other measures that we have taken include a vigorous anti-corruption campaign; the promotion of transparency and accountability in public life; the abolition of decrees and regulations which hindered the inflow of foreign investment; the generation of opportunities for employment and income savings for domestic investment; and the privatization of key State enterprises, such as electricity and telecommunications; legislation and other measures to redress obvious cases of neglect and injustice done to ethnic minorities, particularly in the oil-producing areas of the Niger delta region, and to deal with the problems of the environment; investigation of past human rights violations, with a view to promoting and protecting fundamental freedoms; and strengthening the capacity of the law enforcement agencies to promote law and order, as well as security, and to deal more effectively with the problem of drug trafficking.

Africa is indeed proud and glad to see the end of this century coincide with the total elimination of colonialism and the twin menace of constitutionalized racism in the southern part of the continent. The United Nations deserves our warm commendation for the crucial role it has played in this process.

Let me also pay tribute to the thousands who lost their lives in the struggle for freedom so that those of us alive today can proudly say we have the destiny of the continent in our own hands. It is, however, a destiny which poses monumental challenges in our effort to improve the quality of life on our continent. We must strive to alleviate the grinding poverty and material deprivation that has persistently remained a feature of our political freedom.

As we approach the dawn of the new millennium, the defining feature of our increasingly interdependent world is accelerated globalization, and the liberalization of production, trade, investment and finance.

But for us in the developing world the reality today is quite different. Globalization, in its various manifestations, is already experiencing a troubled relationship with the imperatives of development.

It is rather tragic that Africa, the least developed of all the regions and the least able to cope with external shocks, has borne the brunt of the adverse effects of globalization of the world economy. There are grim statistics which indicate that the well-known marginalization of the African continent has turned into delinkage from the global scene.

Since 1992 Africa's exports and imports as a share of world trade has declined from 4 per cent to 2 per cent. Africa's development is presently straitjacketed by a debt burden of around $300 billion. The continent is experiencing import compression, weak productivity and low output. On the average, factories that are still operating do so at less than 30 per cent of installed capacity. Africa's share in total foreign direct investment inflows to developing countries has dropped from 11 per cent in the late 1980s to less than 5 per cent in the second half of the 1990s, and to a meagre 1.2 per cent of world foreign direct investment flows in 1997.

This trend has continued, despite the efforts of African countries to implement far-reaching economic reforms and maintain macroeconomic stability, particularly through the introduction of a more open and business-friendly investment environment, and the provision of incentives to attract foreign investment.

In the quest for a better and fairer management of a globalized world economy, it is now incumbent upon us to direct our searchlight on the unsatisfactory evolution of the multilateral trading system. In participating in the historic Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations that ushered in the new rules-based trading system, the developing world had hoped that the new trading regime would enhance their trading fortunes, facilitate their effective integration into the world economy, and arrest their marginalization from the global trading system.

Unfortunately, however, the vast majority of developing countries, particularly in Africa, have so far been unable to reap the benefits arising from their membership of the World Trade Organization. Africa's trade prospects continue to be hampered by the non-implementation of the special and differential provisions that favour developing countries, and the increasingly protectionist measures that are being imposed against their export products. Besides, the paucity of technical and financial assistance that would have enabled the developing countries to take advantage of the limited

market access opportunities that exist continues to deepen Africa's marginalization in the globalized world economy.

Without doubt, the biggest monetary and financial obstacle confronting developing countries is the chronic debt overhang. According to United Nations figures, the global debt of all developing countries stood at $567 billion in 1980, and $1.4 trillion in 1992. In that 12-year period these countries made foreign debt payments totalling $1.6 trillion. Now, out of the 41 countries which the World Bank describes as heavily indebted poor countries, 33 are African countries, a group that some believe is richly deserving of its own special category: severely indebted low-income countries. Today in sub-Saharan Africa every man, woman and child owes $357. This is a continent where millions live in abject poverty, earning around $100 a year, or 27 cents a day. Some African countries now spend as much as four times on servicing debts as they do on education and health care. Some countries spend up to 40 per cent of their national budgets on debt servicing. Furthermore, it is reliably estimated that for every dollar given in official development aid, $3 go back to the rich countries in debt service payments.

I make bold to assert that calling for debt relief for developing countries is not a plea for charity, but is an urgent matter of social and economic justice. It has to be redressed if there is to be peace and stability in the twenty-first century. Therefore, we propose definitive debt cancellation, not just reduction or rescheduling of the debt service regime. Eligibility should be limited to unpayable debts, which for Africa means the bulk of the $300 billion current stock of debt. There should be debt remission that is not predicated on the institutionally harsh conditionalities of structural adjustment programmes. There should be recognition on both sides of the bargaining table that lenders and borrowers share joint responsibilities for debts incurred in circumstances that are morally questionable in the first place. Debt cancellation should benefit ordinary people.

Nigerians rightly expect democracy to yield perceptible dividends in their lives. Our Administration will, however, find the task of meeting this expectation virtually impossible without substantial reduction of our debt burden, especially as we call on the same citizens to make the sacrifices that are implicit in the recent measures aimed at prudent management of our national economy.

I wish to invite the attention of the Assembly to the related issue of illegal capital flight from Africa. It is an open secret that much of Africa's wealth has been illegally siphoned out of the continent by corrupt regimes and unpatriotic individuals working in collaboration with foreign partners. Nigeria and many African countries would be able to pay off large portions of their debts if only they could recover some of the capital illegally stashed abroad. We thus believe that now is the time to collectively deal with this issue.

In this regard, Nigeria calls for a concerted effort by the international community, through an international convention, for the repatriation to Africa and the developing world of all capital illegally transferred from these countries. Such an international convention or agreement is legally feasible and morally sustainable. It will compel participating banks to disclose the source of the illegal accounts they hold, repatriate them to the countries of rightful ownership and subject the guilty parties to the full weight of national and international law.

It is with a heavy heart that I raise the issue of the HIV/AIDS pandemic throughout Africa. Our continent is bearing the brunt of this terrible disease that now kills around 2 million Africans annually, thus officially overtaking malaria as Africa's number one primary health-care problem. This situation is even more frightening in that it has now left 6 million children orphaned in the eastern and southern parts of Africa. In West Africa the disease has been spreading just as rapidly. Unlike malaria, which is location specific, HIV/AIDS knows neither climatic nor regional boundaries. Global cooperation is an imperative if we are to succeed in dealing with this scourge.

Among the immediate challenges facing Nigeria and Africa today is resolving the many conflicts raging on the continent. Today, as many as 19 sub-Saharan countries are engaged in armed conflicts. The negative impact of these conflicts in human, social, economic and environmental destruction does not need to be described here. Nigeria and indeed the entire West African subregion have devoted considerable human, material, political and diplomatic resources to the resolution of these crises in the subregion, starting with Liberia and subsequently Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. Similarly, efforts are being made in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Angola towards peaceful resolution of their conflicts.

Indeed, African leaders at the recent summit of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Algiers, and at the urging of the Nigerian delegation, agreed to declare next year as the Year of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa. By this declaration, we have dedicated ourselves to making the year 2000 the year when Africans direct all their efforts into effectively eliminating armed conflicts on their continent. We hope to build on the fresh momentum for peace occasioned by the budding peace initiatives in Congo, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Angola.

We are also agreed on the overriding need to uphold codes of decency, ethics and minimum standards of decorum among African Governments and their leadership. Gone are the days when the OAU turned a blind eye to the excesses and abuses of power by member Governments. Forceful and undemocratic changes of Governments will no longer be overlooked or tolerated. We intend to condemn in absolute terms all violations of these codes and to ostracize their perpetrators. It is our duty and moral responsibility to treat our citizens decently and humanely.

My country has always believed that the threat to international peace and security from any corner of the globe should be considered a threat to the peace and security of the world as a whole. While the maintenance of international peace and security remains the primary responsibility of the Security Council, the Charter provision for the complementary role of regional and subregional groups has also proved to be critical to the maintenance of peace at the regional and global levels. The establishment of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is a clear testimony of our commitment to subregional peace. As the record shows, ECOMOG succeeded in putting an end to the Liberian war in 1997, reinstating the democratically elected President of Sierra Leone in 1998, and bringing about the current Peace Agreement for Sierra Leone signed in Lomé in July 1999.

The time has come, however, for the Security Council to assume its full responsibility, specifically in Sierra Leone and other conflict flash points in Africa. For too long, the burden of preserving international peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few States in our subregion. The non-implementation of the Peace Agreement and Nigeria's continual burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop. The United Nations needs to do more in providing logistics and financial support to assist regional peacekeeping and peace-building efforts, as well as enhancing the welfare of refugees worldwide without discrimination.

My delegation believes that it has never been the purpose of the United Nations Organization to prescribe democracy and change for its members and yet make little or no progress in the democratization of its own organs, such as the Security Council. My delegation accordingly urges the General Assembly, during this session, to conclude deliberations and reach agreement on the modalities for the reform and expansion of the Security Council so that the Millennium Assembly will adopt them next year — and not later.

How can the United Nations continue to perpetuate and justify a situation where Africa is the only continent without a permanent seat in the Security Council? In order to promote reform and democratization of the Security Council, Africa, with 53 Member States, should be allocated at least two permanent seats — commensurate not only with the continent's size and population, but with its track record also of contributing to the maintenance of international peace and security.

I wish to reaffirm our belief that the United Nations is the most universal body ever designed for collectively resolving humankind's common problems. Our Organization has come a long way since its establishment 54 years ago. Although created in a different era and under different circumstances, and in spite of numerous constraints, the United Nations has continuously sought to adapt itself to the changes in the international political arena. It has been able to accomplish this to some degree, but it remains an institution whose working methods, procedures and administrative structure have in many respects become outdated.

Yet the world as we know it today without the United Nations would be inconceivable. For it has come to symbolize hope for a better and more secure future for many, particularly in the developing areas of the world. Indeed, though a majority of our countries could not be members when the Organization was created, we are today its strongest defenders and advocates of the ideals for which it stands. We believe in the family of nations, and within that family the strong members have the responsibility to protect and strengthen the weaker members.

At the close of the twentieth century and the beginning of the third millennium, there is a need for stock-taking and for proper assessment of the

implementation of previous resolutions emanating especially from the major world summits and conferences which took place in this decade. Such an effort would bring us closer to the realization of the purposes and objectives of our Organization. In this regard, I stand before the Assembly and pledge Nigeria's continued contributions and positive commitment to the ideals of the Charter of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, and invite him to address the General Assembly.

Crown Prince Albert (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you warmly, Mr. President, on your well-deserved election and to assure you of the delegation of Monaco's full cooperation in assisting you in the discharge of your lofty mandate. Your role in your country's exemplary struggle for independence and for the dignity of the Namibian people are deeply meaningful for us.

I should like also to thank the members of the General Assembly for entrusting to my country one of the vice-presidencies of this fifty-fourth session, at the same time as Monaco is commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the accession of His Most Serene Highness Prince Rainier III — my father. I wish to assure the Assembly that the delegation of Monaco will strive to be worthy of this honour and to work closely with the other members of the Bureau — whom I congratulate on their election — and the members of the Assembly, to ensure that this session, the last of the century, produces effective, concrete and tangible results.

I avail myself of this opportunity to thank also Mr. Didier Opertti, President of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, for his dedication and accessibility and for the competence and diplomatic skill with which he guided our work.

I should like also to congratulate and warmly welcome the three new States Members of the United Nations — the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. The Government and people of Monaco are particularly pleased to greet these three countries of the Pacific, with which we share a number of concerns about the protection of the oceans and seas. We assure them of our readiness to enter into and develop a solid and fruitful cooperation with them.

Finally, I should like most sincerely to express my satisfaction, as many have already done from this rostrum, at the resumption of the peace process in the Middle East and the immense hopes to which it has given rise.

Since the general debate of the previous session, many distressing events have unfolded, some of which have had serious consequences that will last for years. The conflict in Kosovo, with the thousands of refugees and the massive suffering that it caused, was one of the most obvious. The whole of the United Nations system was mobilized, in a way that has certainly never happened before, to assemble the resources required to come to the aid of the populations in distress. The armed intervention and the decisive role played by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia at The Hague, brought to bear in defence of the principles of humanity and human rights, seem to foreshadow a strengthened determination on the part of the international community to enforce respect for the fundamental values of justice and human dignity that inspired the San Francisco Charter.

We offer our sincere encouragement to the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo as it strives, despite the major difficulties in its way, to implement the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). We wish courage, perseverance and success to the men and women responsible for carrying out that noble mandate of ensuring security, extinguishing the

flames of hate and restoring good-neighbourly relations among the communities.

I should also like to emphasize the crucial role played by the United Nations in holding the election on self-determination in East Timor and in the protection operation that our Organization has recently launched to come to the aid of the civilian population there. We are following developments on the ground extremely carefully, and we hope that implementation of Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) will proceed without hindrance or delay.

In this context, we should recall the very enlightening debate held by the Security Council on 12 February on the issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict, during which the subject of internal conflicts, which have now become more numerous than those between States, was discussed at length. It was recalled that such conflicts fall under the purview of the 1949 Geneva Conventions, whose fiftieth anniversary we have just commemorated, especially the provisions of the Fourth Convention. Article 3, which is common to all four instruments, imposes rules of conduct that are binding on the High-Contracting Parties, whatever the circumstances and nature of the conflict. That article categorically prohibits any kind of attack on the life and physical and moral integrity of the person, as well as the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgement or indispensable judicial guarantees.

On 16 and 17 September, a further debate took place in the Security Council on the same issue, the positive result of which was the adoption of resolution 1265 (1999), which makes considerable demands on both States and the international community as a whole. It stresses in particular that it is incumbent on States to put and end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and serious violations of international humanitarian law. The Principality of Monaco unreservedly endorses these recommendations, which we consider to be extremely important.

We have very high hopes for the establishment of the International Criminal Court as a means of better preventing war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Principality of Monaco was one of the first signatories of the Statute, which was adopted last year.

In Kosovo, in East Timor and in conflicts that are often forgotten or that receive no recognition, particularly those in Africa, it is the weakest and the most vulnerable, particularly children, who suffer most. With the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child taking place on 20 November, it is up to us now more than ever to see to it that children, in peace as well as in war, are strictly protected from all forms of violence and subjugation. Following on from the presidential statement of June 1998, Security Council resolution 1261 (1999), adopted on 25 August, will, we hope, make a decisive contribution to resolving the distressing problem of the fate of children in times of armed conflict.

My country, which is committed to that end, has been host to a number of international non-governmental organizations dedicated to the protection of children. These associations are working hand in hand with the United Nations specialized agencies. For its part, the Principality of Monaco is actively contributing on a regular basis to steps taken to improve the lot of the most disadvantaged children.

Just as children need to be protected, women, too, deserve the keenest attention from the international community. Many forms of discrimination and injustice — indeed, cruelty — including genital mutilation, which is the cause of much pain and humiliation, are still too often tolerated. They represent a number of obstacles to women's achieving their full potential. In a report recently submitted to the Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, a non-governmental organization known for its competence and precision denounced the unacceptable treatment still being endured by women in many countries, be they young girls, wives or mothers. I should like in this connection to emphasize the high regard in which we held the high-level debate that took place in the Economic and Social Council last July on the role of jobs and work in the elimination of poverty, emphasizing in particular the advancement of women.

Women's access to jobs, as well as to education and professional training, has been widely encouraged. It is one of the areas of concern of the Government of the Principality, which is taking specific measures in the social and educational fields in order to deal with the issue. Respect for equality between men and women in daily life, as well as in the development of their professional careers, in both public and private sectors, is essential if we are to improve the situation of women and combat the precariousness and poverty that often affect them much more than men. We are particularly aware of that. The substantial involvement of women in political and economic decision-making can also

contribute to ensuring greater social justice, while stimulating and balancing the economy. The authorities of my country are convinced of this and are striving to take steps to adjust and complete the legislation of Monaco so as to ensure that in every respect it is in conformity with the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, so that Monaco can soon become a party to that essential instrument.

Because of the complexity and irrevocably globalized nature of today's economy, it has become necessary, now more than ever, to achieve greater balance at both the national and international levels. Existing inequalities, whatever their origin, must necessarily be reduced to make sure that the dangerous gap separating the industrialized countries from the most disadvantaged countries does not grow wider. The Ministers of Economics and Finance of 44 States and Governments members of the International Organization of La Francophonie were able to devote themselves to that subject during their first meeting, which took place in Monaco on 14 and 15 April last.

Those leaders, like those who met in Geneva at the July substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, recognized that globalization, if poorly controlled, could have serious consequences for the future of all nations. Stepped up trade and investment, and the adoption of policies of liberalization — sure engines of growth — have not yet enabled everyone to enjoy significant development. We must guard against some being barred from progress and from the benefits of the major trends in the world economy, something that could have serious consequences.

Aware of that danger and of the deterioration in international relations it could cause, ministers of the economy or of finance of Francophone countries, meeting in Monaco, recognized the need for better supervision of the human and social effects of ongoing economic processes, including structural adjustment policies. They stressed the importance of maintaining, or indeed increasing, official development assistance, while adopting appropriate measures to encourage private investment. They indicated their grave concern at the unbearable burden of external debt for many countries. The Government of Monaco shares that grave concern.

The Monaco Declaration issued at the end of their meeting by ministers of the economy or of finance of Francophone countries solemnly recalled the fundamental link among economic development, democracy and good governance. The Declaration stressed the importance of upcoming multilateral trade negotiations, noted the mission of the World Trade Organization to encompass all members of the international community, and stressed the importance of improving the international trading system so that it will make a greater contribution to sustainable development and to meeting the real expectations of peoples. It also invited the world financial community to maintain its assistance to development, through both official and private contributions.

The Principality of Monaco, which joined the Intergovernmental Agency of La Francophonie in organizing this first meeting, is committed to contribute actively to implementing the Monaco Declaration and to encourage the establishment of a permanent Francophone centre for gathering and exchanging economic information; the recent summit of heads of State or Government of Francophone countries, held at Moncton, Canada, from 3 to 5 September, agreed to establish such a centre in Monaco.

Supported by many world leaders, the Jubilee 2000 campaign to cancel debts that the poorest countries are finding it difficult to repay enjoys wide backing. Given certain modifications, it seems to us to be of great interest, if only because it will enable countries experiencing great difficulties to resume unhindered progress towards development. Here, my country's leaders are duly appreciative of the decision taken at Cologne last June by the heads of State or Government of the seven major industrialized countries and of Russia to reduce significantly the external debt of some 40 such countries.

I reaffirm Monaco's unswerving determination to meet its international obligations and its firm commitment to the values of human rights and humanitarian principles, and wish to affirm that the highest authorities of my country are devoting close attention to progress in the sphere of disarmament. The limitation and reduction of nuclear weapons is a constant concern of the Government of the Principality. In our view, universal ratification of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) — which, to our great satisfaction, was indefinitely extended in 1995 — should be promoted, as should the complete application of the comprehensive safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency, whose remarkable International Laboratory of Marine Radioactivity we have been honoured to host since 1986.

The year-2000 conference of States parties to the NPT will be decisive. Here, my country praises those countries, some of them close friends, that have made major sacrifices to dismantle a portion of their nuclear arsenals while taking great care with the processing of the fissile materials extracted from them. We unreservedly share the view of Governments that favour the formulation and adoption of international rules to prohibit the production of fissile materials intended for the production of nuclear weapons and explosives.

The Government of the Principality considers that controls intended to prevent transfers of materials and equipment that could be used for the manufacture of nuclear weapons should be strengthened, but it strongly favours improved international cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy — given, of course, all the necessary precautions with respect to environmental protection.

The Principality of Monaco earnestly hopes for an early end to all nuclear-weapons tests; the threat that these weapons pose to mankind has often, and rightly, been denounced. We are convinced that the accession of all Powers to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) — which my father, the reigning Prince, ratified on 20 November 1998 — would be a giant step towards limiting these dreadful weapons of mass destruction. As a party to the CTBT, the Principality would wish to see greater commitment to that important treaty. We welcome the existence of nuclear-weapon-free zones established on the basis of arrangements freely entered into by the States of various regions, and hope that strengthening confidence and international security will ultimately lead to the spread of such zones.

Let me recall the keen interest of the Principality of Monaco in the implementation of the 1993 Paris Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, to which my country has been a party since 1 June 1995, and of the 1972 Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction, our instrument of accession to which was deposited on 30 April 1999.

My country welcomes the measures adopted at Maputo, Mozambique, last May, at the first Meeting of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, which entered into force in Monaco on 15 March 1999.

Engaged from the very beginning in the fight against these deadly devices, which strike hardest at civilian populations, particularly the elderly, women and children, Monaco signed and quickly ratified this instrument. My country is fully determined to continue its efforts to contribute to eliminating these weapons once and for all.

When, on 12 November 1998, the Principality of Monaco signed the International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombing, it wanted to make a formal commitment and to place clearly on record its position in this regard. Through me, Monaco confirms that decision before the Assembly, once again condemning all forms of terrorism, which blindly and mercilessly strikes too many innocents, as we have had occasion once again to note recently.

In this spirit, it is appropriate to pay a special tribute to the United Nations Mission in East Timor for the role it is playing and for the courage its representatives are displaying, notably the members of the international staff that remained in place under the gravest of threats.

In this connection, I should like once again to forcefully reaffirm our complete solidarity with United Nations personnel, some of whom this year have lost their lives, been injured, or suffered violence and other grave offenses. Monaco, which was among the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, deplores in the strongest terms and condemns without reserve the inadmissible acts of aggression and intimidation of which they have been victims. We take this opportunity to salute the first among United Nations personnel, the Secretary-General, who enjoys our highest esteem for his actions at the head of the Organization, particularly during periods of crisis and in the extremely difficult circumstances with which he is regularly confronted.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness Crown Prince Albert, Crown Prince of the Principality of Monaco, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: Before calling on the next speaker, I would like to request representatives to be good enough to move quietly through the aisles at the end of each statement and as they exit and enter the General Assembly Hall, in order not to disturb the speaker who has the floor. I rely on those present to cooperate in maintaining order and quiet in the Hall, in keeping with the dignity and decorum of Members of the General Assembly.

I now call on the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Canada, His Excellency The Honourable Lloyd Axworthy.

Mr. Axworthy (Canada): Allow me first to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly. Canadians are proud to have accompanied you and your people on their journey to join the community of nations.

On behalf of Canada, allow me also to welcome the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga as new Members of the United Nations.

(*spoke in French*)

Mr. President, your election is a tribute to your wisdom and your dedication to the goals of the United Nations. I am convinced that you will guide us well in carrying out the work that we are gathered here to do on behalf of all of the world's people.

(*spoke in English*)

Indeed, it is we the people for whom the United Nations was founded and its purposes forged. We the people, not we the nation States, or the ministers, or the ambassadors, or the Secretariat. Let us recall these lines from the United Nations Charter:

> "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, ... to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, ... to establish conditions under which justice ... can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, ... have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims".

These are noble words and compelling goals. But do they still ring true, or is there a need for new meaning and new commitment?

How would we the people assess the handiwork of the United Nations to date and judge the world scene today when we have seen in the last year alone the brutal ethnic cleansing of Kosovo, the slaughter and maiming of innocents in Sierra Leone, Angola, both Congos and Sudan and the cruel suppression of the independence agreement in East Timor? Or when we see kidnapping and terrorism plaguing virtually every region, the growing, powerful influence of the drug-traffickers and criminals, the return of the slave merchants and the emergence of modern warlords who brutalize and exploit communities for economic gain? Or when we are all subject to the darker side of globalization, where international commerce brings new but poorly distributed wealth, where helpless children are recruited into armies or sold on the internet for exploitive purposes, where environmental degradation inflicts a high cost on the smallest countries, which can least afford it?

Our world on the eve of the millennium is increasingly shaped by these and a variety of other direct threats to people. If we the peoples were to have the chance to rethink the Preamble to the Charter, we might well say that we are determined to save existing generations from the grave new risks to their personal and family security.

It is true that there is another perspective, one that gives a glimmer of hope. We could point with some satisfaction to the fact that, through the combined efforts of people working together across borders, there is an emerging sense of accomplishment in responding to these new threats to human security.

As of today, 86 nations have ratified the Convention on antipersonnel mines, ushering in a legal regime and a plan of action that will save the lives of thousands.

Working together last year, 120 nations voted in favour of an International Criminal Court, which will establish individual accountability for crimes against humanity.

In the field of conflict, the United Nations is now attempting to rebuild the broken fields of Kosovo after an unprecedented intervention for humanitarian reasons. And in East Timor, peacekeepers are bringing order to that long-troubled land.

So we the peoples have not given up in the face of the confusion, turmoil and misery which beset our world;

and we still search through the corridors of this building for words of cooperation and acts of consensus.

(spoke in French)

But it is not easy, because many forget that it is we the peoples, all the world's people, whom we are here to serve, not just their particular national interests. Too many protect their prerogatives, engage in exclusive power politics or refuse to pay their bills, thereby paralysing the institution and rendering it incapable of meeting the challenges to our collective well-being.

It is difficult to promote an agenda for the security of people when some stand opposed, on the basis of a desire to protect at all costs the sovereignty of the State. Of course, State sovereignty remains a fundamental tenet of peace and security; but it is not absolute, and it is not a shield behind which the most egregious violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms can be hidden.

It is time, therefore, for we the peoples represented in this Assembly to reassess our influence and make our voices heard.

(spoke in English)

There is a new road map to lead the way. Last week the Secretary-General tabled a report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (S/1999/957) in which he captures many of today's challenges and sets out 40 recommendations for action.

The heaviest burden falls on the Security Council. The search for global peace increasingly turns on issues of personal safety. Modern conflict takes a huge, disproportionate toll on civilians. In this world, the protection of civilians must be central to the Council's work. It must provide the subtext for our future collective action and the impetus behind our efforts to prevent conflict, keep the peace, enforce sanctions and support the collective will of the United Nations.

The way ahead is not without obstacles. There are legitimate questions about the purposes, limits and standards for Council engagement for humanitarian ends, which itself also present difficult contradictions with regard to the principle of non-interference. Clear and consistent criteria are needed against which the necessity or otherwise of humanitarian intervention — including enforcement — can be judged and applied. These tests must be very demanding: the basis must be the existence of fundamental breaches of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The human dimension makes it imperative that the Council adapt the blunt instrument of sanctions into a targeted tool so that they hurt where they are supposed to hurt. The Council needs also to show the resolve to implement sanctions once they are in place. This is Canada's objective as chairman of the Council's Angola sanctions Committee established pursuant to resolution 864 (1993) — to develop tougher measures to constrain the trade in arms and diamonds, thereby making it more difficult for UNITA to wage war. It is time to tackle the new war economy in which a direct relationship exists between certain businesses, mercenaries and warlords, a relationship that perpetuates misery, conflict and the victimization of innocent people.

A human security agenda highlights the urgent need to face clearly the issue of the Council's representation and its decision-making processes, especially the inappropriate use and persistent threat of the veto where it can compromise, complicate and slow down determined, urgent international action to protect people. The Council needs to come to grips with these challenges if it is to maintain its credibility in the eyes of the people it serves. Membership in the Council is a trust, and Council members need to demonstrate their capacity to maintain that trust.

The issues raised by the Secretary-General in his report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict are issues that plague all peoples. The Secretary-General's proposals in fact go beyond the purview of just the Security Council; the onus for taking action lies with all Member States. For that reason, I strongly urge that the General Assembly should begin consideration of this report and move quickly to establish mechanisms to give effect to its recommendations, including a system of reporting to review implementation. Towards this end, Canada looks forward to working with the Secretary-General and fellow Member States to establish a "friends of civilians in armed conflict" group to help guide these efforts.

To protect civilians in armed conflict, the Assembly has the means to enable the United Nations to act more quickly; the moral authority to establish universal standards that hold us all accountable; and the legitimacy to direct efforts into new areas of global endeavour. The ability to respond rapidly when the security of civilians is threatened is essential. Giving the United Nations a

rapid response capability — particularly through the creation of a United Nations headquarters for rapid deployment — would be an important step. How much more effective could the United Nations have been in East Timor or in Kosovo if such a capability had existed?

The civilian side of peace operations — the police and the judges, the civil servants and the human rights experts — is also of growing importance, but insufficient capacity for rapid deployment is a problem here too. Clearly the "White Helmets" are as critical to building peace as the Blue Helmets, and they deserve no less of our attention. Those of us who are able might start by improving our respective national capacity to make contributions to be put at the service of the United Nations. This is something my Government has begun and is working to improve. Globally binding humanitarian and human rights standards for behaviour and practical mechanisms to hold transgressors accountable would also advance the security of people subjected to the horrors of armed conflict.

The adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court was a qualitative step forward. It will help to end the culture of impunity and protect all people against the most egregious violations of humanitarian law. The Assembly's priority now should be to bring the Court to life. This means continued cooperation from us all in building the technical underpinnings of this Court. It also means ensuring prompt and widespread ratification of the Court's Statute.

Strengthened standards and strategies are needed elsewhere. For example, negotiating the strongest possible optional protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which should be accompanied by a comprehensive action plan, will help to confront one of the most heinous aspects of modern warfare and other conflict.

We agree with the Secretary-General that more must be done to protect humanitarian workers who risk their lives to help the victims of war. That is why Canada will be seeking an additional protocol to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel to provide legal protection to all personnel working in situations of armed conflict, including a broader range of non-governmental organizations and locally employed personnel.

Finally, the Assembly can direct its efforts towards making the safety of people the emphasis in a wider range of global endeavours.

(*spoke in French*)

The greatest threat to human safety remains the possibility of annihilation by nuclear or other weapons of mass destruction. Yet the non-proliferation regime that we have painstakingly built over the past 50 years remains fragile. We should now ensure that the obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are respected, and we should implement the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and reduce the risk that nuclear weapons pose to our collective security.

Human security is also the impetus behind efforts to address the problem of small arms, which kill in conflict zones as well as on neighbourhood streets. This is a global challenge that requires a global solution. We should therefore convene a conference on the illicit traffic in small arms, with a comprehensive agenda.

(*spoke in English*)

Transnational crime, including the illicit drug trade, terrorism and human smuggling, is a closely related challenge. It has a direct impact on the safety of all our people. The conclusion of an effective United Nations transnational organized crime convention and its protocols would be a start to providing that protection.

Taken together, those efforts would be a strong beginning to orienting the Assembly to meet the real security needs of people today. I must be very blunt: improvement in human security is a necessary condition for success in the other important actions that we take to advance human, economic, aid and trade development. Farmers cannot work fields strewn with mines. Children cannot learn when they are abused and brutalized by war. Investors will not send money to regions racked by conflict. Societies cannot flourish when resources are pillaged to fuel violence and people are victimized by terror.

Ultimately, freedom from fear is intimately connected to the freedom from want. And it is freedom from fear for all peoples — which is at the heart of the Secretary-General's report and his recommendations — that provides the United Nations with a clear, defining role at the century's close. Our collective efforts towards that end will give concrete expression to the hopes and dreams of the generation that first made "we the peoples" the basis for this Organization. Next year's Millennium Assembly and summit offer an opportunity to articulate

a vision of the United Nations that places the safety of people at the centre of its agenda.

The United Nations cannot do it all. The challenges to advancing human safety are complex. Regional organizations play an important role. Practical cooperation between countries can address specific problems and the participation of members of civil society and non-governmental organizations is also imperative. But security for all of us begins and ends with a strong, effective United Nations focused on this goal. We the peoples should resolve to work together to achieve this end.

The President: I now give the floor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa.

Mr. Moussa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it gives me great pleasure to extend to you, Sir, and to your friendly country my sincere congratulations upon your election as President of the General Assembly. I am fully confident that you will steer the work of this important session ably and effectively. I would also like to express my appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay, President of the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, for his wise conduct of the business of that session.

It also gives me pleasure on this occasion to salute the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, and his efforts to maintain the role of the international Organization, improve its performance, increase its efficiency and restore its credibility and effectiveness. My pleasure is all the greater in welcoming the Republics of Kiribati and Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga to membership of the United Nations.

The fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly is being held at a historic juncture that comes only once every 100 — indeed, every 1,000 — years. This is the last session of the General Assembly before the end of the twentieth century and of the second millennium since the birth of Christ. That century and that millennium have embodied a combination of mankind's greatest achievements as well as catastrophic tragedies.

Yes, the second millennium has witnessed momentous events. During the last century of this millennium, these events have taken place at a pace faster than any recorded history of humanity. The outgoing century has become a catalogue of contradictions, some of which bear testimony to mankind's genius and others to its ignominies and immoralities. All our diverse civilizations, without exception, have produced warmongers and destructive tyrants. They have also produced great leaders, advocates of peace, inventors, creative artists, scientists, explorers and statesmen who provided good leadership and gave wise counsel.

According to the Gregorian calendar, we are at the close of a century and a millennium. By the Hijri calendar, we are in the fifteenth century after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad, who revealed to the world a noble religion and gave it an enlightened civilization. We in Egypt are approaching the end of the seventh millennium in the life of an ancient country; a country that is as old as history itself; a country that contributed to the making and recording of history. Humanity's attainments at this time and in this age are not the fruit of the achievements of the twentieth century alone; rather, they are the result of the accumulated achievements made since the beginning of time. The Egyptians excelled at science and engineering and were the first to profess monotheism. The Babylonians gave the world the alphabet. The Phoenicians mastered navigation. The Arab civilization flourished in al-Andalus, preserved Greek philosophy and added to it. The Islamic civilization in Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Turkey made great contributions to all aspects of life. The Renaissance in the Italian city-States followed. Then came the French Revolution, advocating the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The industrial revolution started in Britain. America ushered in the computer, information and communication revolutions and the age of space exploration and atomic energy. I would also refer here to the profound philosophies and great civilizations that flourished in China, India, Japan and elsewhere.

This is a necessary statement of fact as we bid farewell to this century and this millennium. Everyone must be aware that we are all partners in the creation of the contemporary genius. Yet the future is our real concern. The future brings with it new challenges in the fields of science and information; economic and monetary matters; culture, politics and security; and the conduct of relations between peoples and societies. These are some of the challenges of the coming century. To this list must be added the legacy of the unresolved problems of the twentieth century.

The end of a century or a millennium does not mean the end or solution of existing problems. Indeed, it is a historical juncture and will undoubtedly mark new challenges. Problems, like progress, are characterized by

continuity. This makes it necessary to agree on a new forward-looking agenda that anticipates the future, its expectations and risks — an agenda that will prepare us to solve existing and persistent problems.

Here, I hasten to add that new breaths of fresh air have begun to blow in various parts of the world. They, too, will accompany us into the coming century. Africa continues to suffer from armed and ethnic conflicts and the disruption of development efforts. Yet a serious African policy is being developed to put an end to these conflicts and to achieve settlements on the basis of dialogue, national reconciliation and conciliation between neighbours. We also note that the African Summit held last June in Algiers decided that the countries whose Governments had taken power by unconstitutional means must restore constitutional legitimacy before the convening of the next African Summit in the year 2000. The Fourth Extraordinary Summit of the Organization of African Unity, held in Syrte earlier this month, reaffirmed the continent's resolve to proceed on the path of unity through the speedy implementation of a treaty establishing the African Economic Community.

On the Asian continent, the situation in the Korean peninsula and the question of Kashmir are still sources of tension and confrontation. Afghanistan remains a source of instability and tension and a haven for terrorism. Yet the Asian economies are showing signs of recovery and are preparing to compensate for the sacrifices that were made and the development efforts that were lost as a result of the financial crisis of 1997.

As for East Timor, the popular consultation held last August reflected, in the words of the Secretary General, the will of the people of East Timor for self-determination without representing victory or defeat for any of the parties. This process could not have been successful without the bold initiative of President Habibie. While calling for a peaceful and orderly transition of power, Egypt pays tribute to the wise decision of the Indonesian Government to accept the deployment of an international force in the territory. This is a responsible and wise course of action that will restore calm and order there.

Europe was the origin and theatre of the two World Wars that were bitterly experienced by humanity in its long history. There, the hateful practices of ethnic cleansing are again looming on the horizon. Yet, we have seen the international community take a clear and firm stand against such practices and against attacks on the identity of peoples and nations. We have also witnessed some progress in the constitutional dialogue that aims at resolving the question of Northern Ireland, the oldest contemporary crisis on the European continent.

In the Middle East, the peace process is now heading towards a new and positive stage. It is our hope that this will lead to a comprehensive, just, and peaceful settlement that will establish the Palestinian State, put an end to the occupation of the Syrian and Lebanese territories and ensure security for all. Thus, an end will be put to this conflict and its files will hopefully be closed.

Despite its centrality, the Arab-Israeli conflict is not the only problem in that vast region. Other problems include that of Western Sahara in northern Africa, the islands of the United Arab Emirates in the Gulf and the question of Sudan. The latter is high on the list of priorities of Egyptian diplomacy. For two years now, we have been making intensive efforts and establishing contacts with both the Sudanese Government and the opposition in order to achieve comprehensive national reconciliation and to preserve the unity, identity and territorial integrity of that brotherly country. We have been coordinating with Libya, the members of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the forum of the partners of IGAD to ensure that all the efforts undertaken in this regard are made in a concerted manner.

The situation of Iraq raises numerous questions. The matter does not have a bearing on the Government of Iraq alone. Rather, it pertains to the Iraqi people, their plight and the suffering of their children. An objective and positive review of the status of this important brotherly country has become necessary. This review should proceed from the premise that there are no eternal sanctions and that people have the right to resume normal life and to surpass the errors of the past and move to the bright horizons of the future. In so doing, they must fully abide by the accepted rules of international legality like all other people.

Indeed, Iraqi policy was erroneous in its invasion of Kuwait. A mistake, however, cannot be corrected by a policy which will lead to the collapse of an entire society or cause a whole country to implode. Therefore, Egypt is closely following the current efforts aimed at the suspension by the Security Council of the sanctions within the context of an understanding with the Iraqi Government and under the Council's supervision. This should be the first step towards the lifting of the sanctions

in accordance with paragraph 22 of resolution 687 (1991), all of whose paragraphs ought to be implemented in full.

I stated earlier that despite the high hopes and great expectations pinned on the new century, this historical juncture does not in and of itself bring the existing problems to an end. I am duty-bound to put before you Egypt's belief that certain major questions must be given top priority on the world agenda. These are: international peace and security, the question of the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, eradication of poverty, integration of the developing countries into the world economy on an equitable basis, dialogue between and complementarity of civilizations, and the question of terrorism. These questions transcend time and space in our contemporary world. Their agreed solutions must be the result of our collective thinking and collective action.

If democracy has become a necessary pillar in the formation of the political framework of the societies of the future, it must equally constitute the framework of international relations. Thus, it is necessary that the future world order be based on consensus, on the convergence of interests, on the acceptance of the right of others to make initiatives, and on appreciation for the premises from which they proceed. All this must be debated in a democratic spirit here in the General Assembly, within its new and evolving role.

What is indeed necessary is for us to arrive at a consensus on the regulation of international life. This desired consensus must respect the values, norms and principles that are deeply rooted in humanity's conscience. This consensus must achieve the necessary harmony between individual freedoms, on the one hand, and the collective rights to security, stability and development, on the other hand. It must foster a creative dialogue and a positive interaction between policies, cultures and civilizations, as it must refute the theory of "The Clash of Civilizations" and minimize the possibility of the clash of interests.

We believe that the world, particularly at this promising stage, can ill afford a new conflict or a new cold war. Those who propagate the theory that Islam could become the main threat to the West following the collapse of Communism ignore the fact that Islam is a philosophy and a way of life. It is not an artificial concoction that carries within it the seeds of its demise, as Communism did. They wilfully disregard history's greatest lesson: interaction among diverse cultures enriches all cultures, elevates all civilizations and adds to their vitality and prosperity.

It is only logical for most societies in our world today not to accept the imposition of a single view on world problems. It is also logical for them to reject the view that the interests of a sole society should be given precedence over all others or that the considerations, capabilities and interests of a certain civilization should be forced on all other world civilizations. Therefore, Egypt supports the resolution adopted by the General Assembly last year, at Iran's initiative, proclaiming the year 2001 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Egypt also welcomes the Secretary-General's appointment of a special representative for this important subject.

Addressing the question of dialogue among civilizations is not separate from addressing the question of terrorism. Some thinkers have attempted to brand a certain civilization and culture with that affront.

The phenomenon of international terrorism is not linked to any particular civilization, culture or religion. It recognizes no boundaries and threatens all societies equally. It has become a grave danger that we must urgently combat and eradicate. We have seen acts of terrorism in all parts of the world with diverse cultures and civilizations, but the challenge is one and the same.

The United Nations and many States have gone quite far in facing this phenomenon. However, the few scattered and isolated international conventions and resolutions that deal with it need an integrated framework to turn them into a binding legal code. This code should reflect the concerted efforts of the international community to combat and contain terrorism and to deprive it of any haven or financing.

In this regard, Egypt renews the call of President Hosni Mubarak to convene an international summit under United Nations auspices. The summit, whose objective framework and timing must be agreed upon by consensus, would be mandated to codify the collective and organized will of the international community in dealing with terrorism and in providing the necessary action to combat and deter it.

I would like to move to other, equally important, issues, among which are disarmament and the maintenance of international peace and security. In doing so, I must recall the need to observe the priorities

established by the international community in 1978. Foremost among these priorities are nuclear disarmament and the elimination of other weapons of mass destruction. In this regard, there is a clear need to accelerate the process of nuclear disarmament at the unilateral and bilateral levels as well as within the Conference on Disarmament. There is also a need to speedily achieve the universality of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

These considerations impelled the States of the Alliance of the New Agenda: South Africa, Brazil, Mexico, Ireland, Sweden, New Zealand and my country, Egypt, to adopt a joint declaration in June 1998. The Alliance tabled a resolution, which was adopted by the General Assembly last year by a large majority, calling for the adoption of serious and concrete steps in this regard. The members of the Alliance will continue their efforts during this session.

On the regional level, I have repeatedly stated that the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, which is the optimum way to ensure the security of the Middle East region as a whole, can be achieved only within a comprehensive framework applicable to all without exception. Peace cannot endure with an imbalance of power or a discrepancy in rights and obligations in matters pertaining to national security.

In this regard, all the States of the Middle East, with the sole exception of Israel, have acceded to the NPT and the international regime for the inspection of nuclear facilities. This constitutes a source of constant tension. It negates to a large extent the effectiveness of the international instruments on non-proliferation and arms control. It will lead to an arms race. It is illogical to give a special privilege or a certain exception to only one State in as vast and sensitive a region as the Middle East, and under unacceptable pretexts.

Sound logic necessitates an end to this exception and calls firmly for Israel's accession to the NPT. This subject will force itself on the 2000 NPT Review Conference. The States parties to the Treaty agreed in 1995 on an integrated and comprehensive package to enhance the non-proliferation regime and achieve its universality. The extension of the Treaty was but one of the elements of that package. I would like to stress here the importance of giving top priority at the next Review Conference to crystallizing the serious steps for achieving the universality of the Treaty. The States parties to the Treaty must honour all the obligations and commitments made in 1995 without selectivity or discrimination. Egypt and many other States insist on that. Otherwise, we will reach a state, which has actually begun, of suspicion and lack of confidence.

This will have a grave effect on the credibility of the NPT regime. It will weaken that regime considerably, making it possible to deviate from its provisions or make them subject to exceptions.

Talking of regional security in the Middle East leads me to address the peace process. Egypt maintains, as it always has, that a comprehensive peace based on justice is the only durable and stable peace. This means Israel's withdrawal from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, the establishment of a State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital, restoring the legitimate human and national rights of the Palestinian people and the achievement of security for all. The peace process must deal with all the problems in good faith and with courage. It must not postpone dealing with or negotiating any item or problem. The postponement or abandonment of problems is a postponement and abandonment of peace. This is dangerous and unacceptable and runs counter to the framework and spirit of peace. It might even postpone the establishment of normal relations between the Arab States and Israel.

We had hoped that the Arab-Israeli conflict would come to an end before the end of the twentieth century. This hope is still alive, since the year 2000 is the last year of this century.

This year we witnessed a human tragedy, the likes of which we thought was impossible given the progress that mankind has achieved before the advent of the twenty-first century. Here I refer to the tragedy of Kosovo. While welcoming the adoption by the Security Council of a resolution on the establishment of a Transitional Administration in Kosovo, we stress the need for learning from this tragedy so that succeeding generations will never witness its likes again.

Allow me to address one aspect of this problem which pertains to our present discussion -- the degree to which the rules of international legality, as represented by the United Nations, were observed in a situation that pertains to the maintenance of international peace and security. Here we find that the question of Kosovo was a unique case of international consensus and disagreement at one and the same time. There was a consensus on the need for immediate action to stop the grave crime of ethnic cleansing. At the same time there

was disagreement on who had the right to act. There were different approaches, among which is the one we believe in — namely, that any international action must stem from the Security Council as the competent organ primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. If the Council were unable to do so, then the General Assembly would be the organ that must deal with any threats to international peace and security, as it represents the common interest of all its members.

Our insistence, and that of many others on the essential role of the United Nations, has been reflected in the following significant message; that regardless of how the international order is described, as old or new, international participation in it must take place through the United Nations, particularly when the matter concerns the maintenance of international peace and security.

In this context, I would like to refer to the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization and to his statement made last Monday, in which he reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the collective security system in a manner that would enable the international community to deal with crises before they spin out of control, and the primary role of the Security Council in this regard. The Secretary-General has put forward a number of innovative concepts to develop a "culture of prevention" of crises, among which is the concept of preventive diplomacy. Thus far, no agreement has been reached on the scope of the application of this concept since it was first dealt with in 1992 in "An Agenda for Peace". They also include the concept of the preventive deployment of forces, which will raise numerous questions in view of its connection to the sovereignty of States. Also included is the call for humanitarian intervention and its scope, a suggested role for transnational corporations and the concept of the assessment of the security impact of development policies, which could open the door for new conditionalities if these ideas are not developed democratically, objectively and non-selectively. These ideas and suggestions deal with concepts that are not yet established. This makes it necessary to debate them in an international format characterized by the highest degree of openness and transparency. Their formulation and terms should be agreed upon by all. We propose officially – and we call upon the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General to take the necessary actions in this regard – to have the General Assembly, or a committee of the whole within it, debate these ideas and give them substance. They must be adopted by a consensus of all States, and the Secretary-General would be asked to present a report on the results of this debate to the General Assembly at its next session, in the light of which the Assembly would take a decision on his suggestions.

The World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen made the eradication of poverty a top priority for international action, because it pertains to the stability of the international order and its credibility. Yet the increasing marginalization of the developing countries, particularly that of the least developed countries, most of which are in Africa, threatens to create new lines of confrontation between the North and the South. This confrontation would be fuelled by unjust economic, social and development considerations and standards, and it could negatively affect international stability.

Egypt, the current Chair of the Group of 15, presented a paper to the eighty-seventh session of the International Labour Organization reflecting the views of the Group regarding the negative effects of globalization, the crisis of international markets and the concomitant increase in unemployment. All these matters must be taken into account in the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action and the programmes of action of other major conferences.

We also note that some developed countries have adopted protectionist measures under the pretext of protection of the environment, respect for human rights and labour standards. These policies deepen the imbalances in the international trading system. Here I must reaffirm the need for the developed countries to honour all their obligations under the Uruguay Round and the full implementation of the agreements and resolutions of that Round before engaging in any new negotiations to further liberalize international trade.

I further reaffirm the importance of strengthening the role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) at its tenth session, to be held in Bangkok, to achieve a balance between the interests of the developed and the developing countries. Here I must refer to the role of the international financial institutions. This question needs a conscientious review in the light of the current changes in the international economic arena. The review should make these institutions more responsive to the needs of comprehensive development. It should ensure the full participation of the developing countries in the making of decisions on the reform of the international financial system.

In conclusion, we look forward to the new century with hope; yet the questions surrounding it abound, foremost of which is that two thirds of the people of the world live in a state of underdevelopment and suffering. How could we face the challenges of the wars that continue to rage, the continued flows of refugees, war crimes that continue to be perpetrated and the dire poverty of those who cannot have their daily bread or afford a school to educate their children or a hospital to treat them? Any talk about globalization must take all that into account.

These were the challenges of the past. They are also the challenges of the present, and will be the challenges of the future. We will be able to face them only with a stronger will and a stronger commitment, with a more objective way of thinking and more effective mechanisms for action. In this way we will arrive at a new social contract, usher in a new economic era and forge a new security consensus for the world of tomorrow.

The President: The next speaker is the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, His Excellency Mr. Yasser Arafat.

Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, was escorted to the rostrum.

Mr. Arafat (Palestine)(*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to see you presiding over this new session of the General Assembly after your long struggle to gain freedom, along with Sam Nujoma, Nelson Mandela and others who fought to bring an end to the era of colonialism, apartheid and foreign occupation.

Your presence here today leading this session of the General Assembly attests to the victory achieved by the people of Namibia in the battle for freedom and independence. It strengthens the hope of the Palestinian people that the dawn of their freedom and the independence of their homeland, Palestine, is near. Furthermore, the victory of your friendly country, Namibia, affirms the constructive role played by the United Nations in the eradication of the colonialism that has burdened oppressed peoples and in enabling them to gain their national independence. I call upon the United Nations to continue to undertake this historic role to eliminate all forms of occupation and colonialism and to strengthen the foundations of peace throughout the world.

As I congratulate and welcome you, Sir, I would be remiss if I did not extend our gratitude to your predecessor, Mr. Didier Opertti. It also gives me great pleasure to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Kofi Annan, the Secretary-General, for his distinguished role in leading this international Organization and promoting for world peace.

I also want to congratulate the three new members of the United Nations: the Republic of Kiribati, the Republic of Nauru and the Kingdom of Tonga. Their membership is an important step towards the realization of the universality of the Organization.

I address the Assembly today — the representatives of the international community — for the second consecutive year, seeking the continuation of support for the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly at this crucial and sensitive stage that lies between us and the declaration of our independent Palestinian State and sovereignty over our liberated land. This requires the strengthening of international efforts in order to really achieve a just solution to the question of Palestine, the crux of the Middle East conflict. The coming millennium summit, with all the renewed hope and promising beginning it represents for all people, must be a decisive deadline for the achievement of peace in the Middle East. We should work collectively and vigorously to achieve this. I look forward to the participation of Palestine, as a Member State of the United Nations, in the deliberations of the coming millennium summit, and I hope for and trust in the Assembly's support for this Palestinian determination to achieve independence so that Palestine can assume the position it deserves within the family of nations.

As the Assembly is aware, we concluded the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum with Mr. Barak, the new Prime Minister of Israel, on 4 September, under the auspices of President Hosni Mubarak, and in the presence of King Abdullah II, Secretary of State Albright, Mr. Moratinos, representing the European Union, and Mr. Larsen, representing Mr. Kofi Annan.

The Memorandum is aimed at the implementation of all the obligations of the interim period under the Oslo agreement, the Wye River Memorandum and the Hebron Protocol, and at the resumption of the final status negotiations. This was done with the hope of bringing to an end the policy of protraction and freezing that was pursued by the former Israeli Government, which completely paralysed the peace process and almost dashed

the ambitious hopes created by this process for all the countries and peoples of the Middle East.

The Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum serves as a source of new hope for putting the peace process back on the right track, as it reaffirms the implementation of existing agreements and of all the obligations within a specific time-frame. In this connection, I extend my gratitude and thanks to all those who contributed to the conclusion of the Memorandum, particularly our host in Sharm el-Sheikh, President Hosni Mubarak, as well as King Abdullah II and Secretary of State Albright, who undertook tangible and concrete efforts as a representative of President Clinton, and the European leaders, their representatives and their envoys to the peace process. The continuous involvement of these friends in this process was essential and necessary for pushing the process forward. International sponsorship of the Middle East peace process is the guarantee for its definitive and final success.

The absence of such an international role would send the fragile situation in the region back to square one. I therefore call upon the international community to accelerate and strengthen its efforts and participation to push the peace process forward and revitalize it on all tracks. A just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East can last only if it is protected by international legitimacy and if efforts are undertaken to implement all of the resolutions pertaining to the Middle East conflict on the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

We should work hard so that the signing of this Memorandum will succeed in ending the stagnation of the peace process and in opening the door that the former Israeli Government closed in the face of all serious efforts aimed at achieving real peace.

As we reaffirm once more our commitment to the peace process and the implementation of the signed agreements, we hope that this time the Israeli side will implement these agreements scrupulously and honestly, including the phases of redeployment agreed upon in the Wye River and Oslo agreements, the release of prisoners and the other obligations of the transitional period, such as safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and the construction of the Gaza seaport.

The Israeli Government is called upon to immediately and decisively cease all measures that violate international resolutions, laws and covenants and thus destroy the chances of peace. At the forefront of these are the settlement activities and the confiscation of land, especially in Al-Quds Al-Sharif, and its vicinity, and the siege of the city of Bethlehem and the rest of the Palestinian territories. The continuation of these settlement policies and practices will quash the hopes and expectations generated by the signing of the Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum and destroy prospects for the final settlement negotiations, which began on 13 September. The cessation of all such measures is needed in order that we can, together with my new partner, Mr. Barak, continue the march of the peace of the brave that we began with two other partners — the late Yitzhak Rabin, who gave his life for this peace, and Shimon Peres — for a new Middle East.

Hence, we look forward to seeing new, real and tangible changes in the positions and actions of the Israeli side that will open the door, in word and in deed, for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace — a peace of the brave that will lead to the realization of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of their independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif (Jerusalem) as its capital, and the realization of the right of the Palestine refugees to return to their homeland in accordance with resolution 194 (III) which affirms the right of the refugees to return to their homes and the right to compensation for those who do not wish to return.

The realization of the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital will provide the definitive guarantee for the establishment of a permanent peace in the Middle East. It will also be a validation of the Charter of the United Nations and its numerous resolutions over 50 years, beginning with resolution 181 (II) which called for the establishment of two States in Palestine, one Jewish, which is Israel, and one Arab, which is Palestine. The rights of peoples do not diminish because of a statute of limitations or under oppression, and our people have proved through the years that they deserve life, freedom and their own independent State. The time has come for the international community, represented by the General Assembly, to reaffirm this right and to work for its realization.

The goal of the current peace process is the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the application of the principle of land for peace. The latter means total Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, including Al-Quds Al-Sharif — the Holy City of Jerusalem, which is the first

of the two *Qiblahs* and the third Holy Sanctuary of Islam, the place from which the Prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven, and the cradle of the birth of Jesus Christ.

The catastrophe that befell our people 51 years ago, uprooting them from their homeland and dispersing them into exile — thereby stripping them of their dreams and rights as human beings in an attempt to negate their existence — is one of the greatest human tragedies witnessed by the twentieth century. The question of the refugees of Palestine is the oldest and greatest refugee question in our contemporary world. We must recognize the legitimate right of those refugees to return to their homeland, in accordance with United Nations resolutions. Four million Palestinians live in exile and in refugee camps awaiting the time of their return to their homeland, from which they were forcibly expelled. There is no way to achieve peace, stability and security in the Middle East without a solution to the question of the refugees of Palestine and the implementation of resolution 194 (III), which declares their right to return to their homeland.

Two essential things must occur for peace to be complete. First, it is necessary to reach a final settlement on all tracks — the Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese — on the basis of the complete and precise implementation of international legitimacy, especially Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 425 (1978). The second is the provision of economic support and assistance by the international community sufficient for the achievement of a better economic situation and for achieving prosperity in the region. What is required foremost in this regard is raising the Palestinian economy up from the miserable situation in which it finds itself as a result of the long years of occupation, so that building cooperative economic relations in the region will become possible.

Here I wish to thank the donor countries that have provided and continue to provide important assistance to the Palestinian people and to the Palestinian Authority. This assistance is necessary to enable us to overcome the immense difficulties that we have been confronting since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, as a result of the closures and sieges imposed by the previous Israeli Government on the Palestinian territory for long periods, which worsened further the total destruction of the Palestinian economy. The shadows of poverty and unemployment still threaten our economic abilities and plans to reconstruct, build and develop.

The achievement of all of this necessitates the continuation of the constructive efforts of the United Nations, which has permanent responsibility towards the question of Palestine until that issue is resolved in all its aspects. We will also remain in need of our Arab brothers, the Islamic countries and our friends in the Non-Aligned Movement. We will remain in need of the two co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States and the Russian Federation, and also of the European Union, China, Japan, Norway and our other friends around the world.

We must heighten all our efforts until the arrival of the new millennium in many areas and spheres, and not only in the Middle East. In this respect, we have observed some positive developments which are quite reassuring. There is tangible improvement in the area of conflict resolution on the African continent and on the path towards achieving better economic and social development in that great continent. There is the international attention given to Kosovo, as well as other measures carried out in the Balkans. There is also the adoption of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the additional consideration being given to the four Geneva Conventions on the occasion of their fiftieth anniversary. We refer here, with appreciation, to the convening of the Conference of the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention last July regarding the Israeli occupation of our land. There are also the follow-ups and reviews of a series of international conferences five years after their convening, in addition to the preparations being made with regard to such important issues as the culture of peace and the dialogue among civilizations.

All of these things are important developments, but perhaps not enough for us to be able to begin the new millennium under new circumstances. This is particularly so if we look at some of the events and worrisome developments in different areas. There is the continuation of the state of siege in Iraq and the profound suffering of its brotherly people. There is also the continuation of internal conflicts in many countries, such as Afghanistan and others. Recently there have also been worrisome developments in East Timor. But I would like, in particular, to refer to the rise of extreme poverty and to the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots on the individual, national and regional levels.

Perhaps it is we, the poor people of the South, who are most concerned about how to bridge the gap between us and the North, particularly in this era of globalization

of the world economy, whose challenges and consequences we must all face. Here we must exert serious efforts and seek creative means beyond hasty and temporary measures. While it is time for the South to be more prepared to realize such an achievement, the North should also be more prepared for partnership and more realistic, effective and just sharing.

In addition to economic matters, we must also strive to achieve some needed improvements at the political level, particularly with regard to international political relations. It is imperative in this connection that we all give greater significance to the United Nations. This must be done in order for this body to truly and urgently become the effective centre of international and political relations and the source of international legitimacy. It is also necessary to be wholly committed to upholding the principles and provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of international and humanitarian laws, as well as ensuring that they apply to all. We should apply to others the same moral values as we accept for ourselves. There should be one set of criteria and one standard for all cases and in all places. All of this will lead to a more credible system of international relations, in which the incentive to commit wrongs will be lessened and the collective capability to confront and prevent those wrongs will, in turn, be enhanced.

It is with great pride that I would now like to speak of the Bethlehem 2000 celebrations. The Palestinian city of Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus Christ, is the place where we are making preparations to celebrate the end of the second millennium and the beginning of the third. It is also there, in Palestine, that the past, the present and the future will meet in a global vision of hope for all peoples. It is a religious and spiritual occasion of high importance, not only for our people and the other peoples of the region, but also for all the faithful around the world and for the entire international community. I appreciate the unanimous adoption last year of the resolution concerning this great and important matter, and invite the Assembly to continue to grant it its attention and consideration this year.

Here, I wish to extend once again the Palestinian people's invitation to the Assembly and to all the leaders of the world to visit us during this important spiritual and religious occasion in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and the other religious and spiritual places, so that we can proudly live together in peace at this special, historic time.

I should like to extend my gratitude to the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to the Committee's Chairman, Ambassador Ibra Ka of Senegal, to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and to all the staff members of this international Organization working in programmes relating to the question of Palestine. They have all provided immeasurable support to the just cause of the Palestinian people and have most certainly contributed to advancing the peace process towards the achievement of a just, permanent and comprehensive peace — a peace of the brave that will secure justice and freedom for the Palestinian people and their sovereignty over their land, along with security, stability and peace for all countries and peoples of this region.

Once again I express my congratulations to you, Mr. President, and my gratitude to all the members of the international community, reiterating to you the appeal of Palestine — an appeal of right, justice and peace.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization and President of the Palestinian Authority, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.